

BRITAIN'S
GUILT, DANGER AND DUTY;
SEVERAL SERMONS,

PREACHED AT ANDERSTON, NEAR GLASGOW,
AUG. 23, 1795.

WITH LARGE NOTES, AND AN APPENDIX.

BY N. DOUGLAS, V. D. M.

DUNDEE.

*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.
Except ye repent, ye shall perish.
To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.
GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD
WILL TOWARDS MEN.*

“ When empire in its childhood first appears,
“ A watchful fate o'ersees its tender years;
“ When grown more strong it swells and stretches out,
“ And elbows all the kingdoms round about:
“ Till from behind there starts some neighb'ring state,
“ And pushes on its now unwieldy weight;
“ Then down the precipice of time it goes,
“ And sinks in minutes, which in ages rose.”

DRYDEN.

The worm that gnaws their spreading gourd, is Sin,
When this prevails, their ruin must begin.

Dundee,

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ERRATA:

Page 78, line 3, for aspect, read subject.

— 87, — 12, for emotions, read commotions.

— 116, — 15, for force, read enforce.

Other typographical errors the Reader can easily correct in perusing.



TO THE PUBLIC.

THREE is something in human nature that leads most men to entertain some respect for the opinion of their fellow creatures; and he is unworthy of the privileges of a Citizen, and a stranger to the temper and character of a Christian, who is totally destitute of this virtuous sentiment. A feeling mind, when awake to sentiments of honour, virtue, and consistency, must experience pain, should his conduct be misrepresented, and his best, or most innocent actions attributed to unworthy motives, or reputed the result of evil intentions, and calculated to promote bad purposes. The author of the following sermons deems himself bound to give some account of the reasons which have induced to publish them; and also to embrace this opportunity of explaining the motives that have influenced some parts of his conduct, apt to be misunderstood by friends, or misrepresented by enemies.

The substance of these discourses was delivered, sometime ago, to a large audience, many of whom earnestly solicited their publication. To remove every obstacle, a few Friends offered, if only entrusted with the manuscript, to take the whole expence of the impression upon themselves, and also the trouble of ushering them into the world. However willing to oblige such, yet a farther reason weighed not a little in bringing them forth to public view. If the author be well informed, some, whom he would be sorry to disoblige, were dissatisfied with certain things in them, when delivered from the pulpit; and they are now published, that every one who chuses may have it in his power to judge for himself, how far the things advanced are agreeable to truth, and worthy of serious attention in the present alarming crisis. Tho' a public speaker should not be made an offender for a word or phrase, uttered in the fervency of his spirit; yet would the author not chuse to deliver from the pulpit, what he might not avow before the sun. He can declare, and appeal to those that heard him, that not a single expression is softened, nor a single idea designedly omitted in the printed copy. Nay, many things are added, especially in the notes, that were neither delivered in the pulpit, nor indeed, meant to be so, and others that could not be overtaken; so extensive is the subject, tho' it occupied the whole day, and an evening exercise. The duty illustrated is interesting and seasonable, waiting for the Lord in the way of his judgments; and every Christian, who is exercised to godliness, whatever be his opinion respecting public affairs, and the political struggles of the day, which are becoming more and more serious, may find his concern and account in the perusal. He would not, however, chuse to offend any man; but conscious that he spoke the truth, in love to his Country, and reverence for that God in whose name he spake, where he does not refer to his vouchers, he neither dreads, nor despises the resentment of those, who have, or think they have an interest in suppressing the voice of truth: for

nought but guilt need be alarmed at the name of guilt, and what is fair and candid will not dread the light, or shrink from investigation.

By publishing these essays, which were not intended to see the light, some may be gratified, and, it is hoped, edified; and those who were offended at their delivery, if any took offence at them, may now have an opportunity of reviewing them, and judging, in the light of the events of the day, if there be a cause. The author can say, in the integrity of his heart, that a conviction of duty, in the sight of Heaven, directed to the subject, and actuated in the whole discussion; and tho' the service should fail of acceptance with some, he has reason to hope, it was, and shall be owned and accepted of God, to whom it is committed, as a testimony for him against the sins, for which his providence now visits. Tho' he would wish to please men for their profit; yet is he bound, like every minister of the Gospel, to study chiefly to please God, and follow the dictates of his own conscience; deeming it a small matter to be judged of men, when they appear to differ from the verdict of these two judges. Whatever reception this labour of love, for such he ventures to call it, may find with his Countrymen, whose real interest is consulted, should he, whose blessing alone maketh rich, and can save, whether with many, or with them that have no might, deign to own it, in the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest, as a testimony for him against abounding iniquity, this will be of much greater consequence than the probation of the whole world. This is not a time to speak smooth things, when God is pleading an awful controversy, or to give flattering titles to any; and indeed, it is as much a duty now as ever, to cry aloud and not spare, to lift up the voice like a trumpet, and shew sinners their transgressions, and a people laden with iniquity, their sins. True Repentance, or destruction is the alternative; and in order to repent, it is necessary, we should see and feel wherein we have exceeded, by the plain declaration thereof.

With regard to public concerns, in which every individual, in one view or other, is interested, whether he feel it or not, the Author is neither ashamed, nor afraid to declare his sentiments, and unfold his conduct, in the native simplicity of truth. In reflecting on our national character and deportment, amidst such peculiar advantages, he felt his mind impressed for some years, indeed, so far back as the American war, with an apprehension, that a day of wrath awaited these lands, and would infallibly overtake us, if reformation of manners did not prevent. Under this impression, may he be permitted to say, that he made it his constant practice to deprecate that wrath, having never desired the evil day, and to implore a lengthening out of our tranquility. His thoughts and apprehensions on that gloomy, but momentuous subject, he occasionally committed to writing; and, actuated by a concern to use his feeble efforts to prevent, under God, so far as in him lay, the impending doom, published these at length, in the form of a Monitory Address to the nation. By consulting that Address, the Reader will be able to judge what were the Author's motives, and also to learn what he apprehended would be the probable consequences of these prevailing

vices, on which he there animadverts; if the history of Providence, and the Oracles of truth form the rule of his judgment. In other tracts, already submitted to the inspection of the Public, upon the Slave trade, so lately a subject of general discussion, and some other measures of the times, every one that chuses may learn his sentiments and apprehensions, respecting their tendency, and too probable consequences.

At this inauspicious period, when the very term Reform is become odious to many, as if it imported every thing bad and blameworthy, he openly avows himself one of those, who wish for reform in these lands, convinced of its necessity, as well as utility. Is the place where Providence hath cast his lot, many respectable characters, at an early period, espoused that cause; and, among these, some Clergymen, who are an ornament to their profession, an honour to their Country, and a blessing to Society. Induced by reasons which appeared to him weighty, he became a member of the Society here, instituted for the purpose of obtaining, by legal means, Constitutional reform; frequently attended their meetings, and assisted at their deliberations; where, he is free to say, he never saw or heard any thing unbecoming the character of Christians, or of loyal subjects, and dutiful members of the Community: and hence, he has no reason to regret that step of his conduct, tho' the occasion of much obloquy and reproach.

Convinced that many abuses really exist in the management of public concerns, of such a nature as to be offensive to God, and pernicious to the best interests of Society; and persuaded that nothing but an enlargement of the scale of Parliamentary representation, and an abridgment of its delegated authority, could prove a radical cure; he was led, from a concern for the good of his Country, the stability of its Government, upon a safe and honourable basis, the honour and safety of the present reigning Family; and, what is still more, from a concern for the honour of God, and the interest of true religion, to which these abuses are inimical; from these and other reasons, he was led to give that measure his hearty concurrence. This he thought, at the time, the more necessary, by adverting to the commotions and revolutions in a neighbouring nation, and their probable consequences on the other nations of Europe, and particularly on our own; also to the revolution of sentiment, visibly produced of late in the minds of men; and the increasing burdens of the people from wars, which, more or less, owe their origin, if not mistaken, to the want of such reform. Besides the justice of the measure, he thought it the most prudent expedient to prevent any risk of commotions at home; for, allowing the above circumstances their due weight, it appeared to him, that either a Reform, or such a state of things as every friend of his Country must dread and deprecate, would be the alternative. Those who preside over the Community, and the friends to their measures, by denying such reform, and adopting an opposite plan, and of late very strong measures, seem to be of a different mind; but time must determine whose opinion is best founded, and whether these measures prove a corrosive or a cure.

The Author has been told, that he was marked out as an object of prosecution; but conscious of the rectitude of his motives, and of the uprightness of his conduct, so far as concerned in the business of reform, he felt not a moment's alarm on the head. Trusting to God, and to the goodness of the cause, he calmly waited whatever Providence might see good to permit. He well knows that his words and expressions in the pulpit have been often grossly misrepresented, and a sense attached to them the most distant from his thoughts. He pities and forgives those, who can be guilty of such conduct, persuaded this is the way to serve neither their God, their King, nor their Country; but that malicious spirit, who was a liar from the beginning, and never abides by the truth. He has seen his name bandied in news papers, his conduct burlesqued by the pen of the hireling, and heard of his having been lampooned, along with others, in the streets. A good cause needs no such pitiful expedients to support it, however common of late; and they cannot long recommend or prosper a bad one.

He was also traduced as a member of a Convention, whose proceedings were branded by high authority as seditious; when, in fact, the Society of which he was a member, declined to send any Delegate to it; as will appear from their own letter, subjoined in the Appendix. He indeed, attended a preceding one, which might occasion the mistake, having been repeatedly importuned, and also had some business on the spot; but their sitting was short, and their proceedings gave no offence even to the jealous eye of power. From regard to truth, he is bound to declare, that their conduct, so far as he could judge, was loyal, regular and constitutional. Tho' he cordially wishes and prays for happiness to our Rulers, both supreme and subordinate, and success in every measure approved of Heaven; yet, he could not help regarding, from the beginning, the formidable Combination against France; struggling to break the galling and servile bonds of despotism and superstition, with which that nation had been long bound, as involving, in effect, a combination against the designs and purposes of the Almighty; who would mark it, he apprehended, with disappointment and disgrace. And have not events hitherto justified this apprehension? The purest love to his Country, and the warmest concern for its peace and prosperity, naturally led him to lament measures, that seemed to threaten these, not to mention compassion for millions that must more or less suffer by them; and if their very friends have not cause to lament them in the issue, he is much mistaken.

The Public would not be troubled with these things, nor, probably, with the following discourses, were it not that the writer hath seen, with regret, how far many professing Christians seem to be actuated by a spirit unworthy of that character, which they suffer to invade the dearest ties by which society exists, and to interfere with the claims of humanity and benevolence. No man should be made an offender for declaring what appears to him seasonable and momentuous truth, even supposing that he is mistaken; for plain and honest dealing in speaking truth, and animadverting on public vices,

hath become more necessary than ever; and he is unworthy of the character of a servant of the God of heaven, to whom the fear of man, in so doing, proves a snare. He that fears God, and acts in the integrity of his heart, with a single eye to his glory, hath nothing to fear from earth or hell.

While this is transcribing for the press, certain Bills pending in Parliament, give general alarm, as meant to infringe on the freedom of discussion, when any thing may be construed to the prejudice of rulers and their measures; of which a single interested individual may be sole judge. As the sermons here offered to the Public, were delivered from the pulpit, and the impression almost wholly thrown off, before these Bills were heard of, whatever be their intention, or operation in future, they surely can have no retrospective power. Tho' the author respects civil authority, as an ordinance of Heaven, and feels the obligation to obedience in every thing lawful; yet he cannot help being of opinion, that the original Source of all just authority, neither hath, nor will delegate to others what he does not claim, or exercise himself. He allows even his guilty creatures, to inquire into the nature, tendency and measures of his administration, to plead with him respecting his judgments, and to approach his throne, which is prepared for their reception, and there order their cause, and fill their mouth with arguments. On our liberty, in all these respects, he lays no restraint; and human governors, who exist as such by the will of their people, are bound herein to copy his example, upon pain of incurring his displeasure, and exposing their own authority. Every unconstitutional exercise of power becomes dangerous in its precedent, arbitrary and oppressive in its operation. Kings, and all in lawful authority, have a divine right to govern well; but to suppose the contrary, is absurd, and to assert it, blasphemous. A right to rule, however lawfully acquired, may become unjust and illegal, by reason of the mode of exercising it. Rulers may as unquestionably forfeit their right to allegiance, as subjects their right to protection; for upon the truth of this partly rest the claims of the present reigning Family to the throne. While subjects should obey in the Lord, rulers must not provoke them to wrath, by contemning their just complaints, and refusing to redress their grievances, or access even to petition for such redress; for so exhorts an apostle, in the similar case of parents and children. It will remain a wholesome and incontrovertible maxim, that 'Those who are hostile to the Rights and Liberties of the People, can never be the real friends to the just prerogatives of the Crown.' Kings have oftener suffered by the folly and misconduct of professed friends, than by the attacks of avowed enemies; which hath been frequently verified, from the days of Rehoboam, to the death of a late powerful, but unhappy Prince.

This maxim is advanced, by a certain noble writer, (Lord Somers) even in the case of human institutions, 'That cause is just which defends the laws;' and still more must that be the case, when the vindication of the Divine law and government is the great object in view. Convinced of this, the Author is determined to resign, only with his expiring breath, his right as a man, a Christian,

and a minister of the gospel, to declare the truth, where he judges the glory of God, the best interests of Society, and the honour of human nature concerned. His property, his liberty, and even his life, are, no doubt, in the power of men, so far as Providence may permit; but not the freedom of his thoughts and words, where God and conscience leave him at liberty, or require he should think and speak. The attempt to restrain this, Pashur of old found to be the mean of enhancing and accelerating his own doom; and no authority on earth can make the exercise of such a right penal, without incurring guilt, and being amenable to Heaven. In pleading this right, who would not rather, to use the language of a late eloquent advocate for human rights, die, if necessary, the first of British freemen, than the last of British Slaves? Of this mind was an illustrious band of British patriots, who were an ornament to their Country, and to human nature; whose example claims imitation; whose writings delight and instruct; whose names shall be transmitted with honour to latest ages; and to whose virtuous exertions in the cause of Freedom; we are indebted, under God, for every thing worthy of the name. Indeed, the most worthy characters that adorn the page of history, felt the noble flame of Liberty, and dared, in the face of danger and death, to plead her cause, and defend her rights; and he is unworthy of the Liberty wherewith the Son of God makes his people free, who is a stranger to this generous temper.

That sublime Genius Milton, owed much of his elevation of thought, and dignity of sentiment, to the exalted notions which he entertained of civil liberty, the excellencies and advantages of which he often celebrates. Speaking of a people deprived of this inestimable privilege, he saith,

" Men shall,

With Freedom lost, all virtue lose, and fear of God."

The famous Addison, whose writings are so universally read, and so justly admired, shews, in the following lines of his Cato, addressed to his Countrymen, in what estimation he held the sacred depositum, and would have all Free men to hold it, as an object worthy to be secured at the expence of life itself; and surely, the matured judgment of such venerable characters, is sufficient to shelter all the friends of Freedom and Reform, from the invectives of the illiberal, the ignorant, or interested.

' A Day, an Hour of virtuous Liberty,
Is worth a whole Eternity of Bondage!
Remember, O my Friends, the laws, the rights,
The gen'rous plan of pow'r deliver'd down
From age to age, by your renown'd Forefathers,
So dearly bought, the price of so much blood;
Oh, let it never perish in your hands!
But piously transmit it to your children.
Do thou, Great Liberty, inspire our souls,
And make our lives in thy possession happy,
Or our deaths glorious in thy just defence!'

SERMON I.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY IN EVIL TIMES.

ISAIAH XXVI. 8.

YEA, IN THE WAY OF THY JUDGMENTS, O LORD, HAVE WE
WAITED FOR THEE.

THE seed of Abraham, who obtained the honourable title of the Friend of God, were selected from among the idolatrous nations to be his peculiar people. These did he set apart for himself, that they might retain his oracles and worship in purity, receive the promises and predictions of Messiah,—that root and offspring, Lord and Son of David, and, by a corresponding conduct, diffuse the knowledge of his name, and make his praise glorious. By the most signal displays of his power and justice, he effected their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and secured their quiet possession of the land of promise, having driven out, or consumed the old inhabitants, the cup of their iniquity once full, and the period of his forbearance expired.

Jehovah gloried in the title of King of Israel, uniting in himself the characters of their Judge and Lawgiver, their Sovereign and Saviour*, and these he sustains and displays in the whole of his moral administration. While that people were obedient to his laws, and observant of his ordinances, they enjoyed fame and prosperity; and the surrounding nations, having so often felt the vengeance of their arms, solicited peace, upon terms to them highly honourable, or courted their friendship and alliance. Never did the seed of Jacob seek or serve their God in vain. But growing corrupt in their manners, and learning the vices and idolatrous practices of the heathen, whom God had cast out from before them; remaining also deaf to the admonitions of his word and providence, the too frequent consequences of ease and prosperity, justly provoked at such wicked and ungrateful conduct, he, at length, reversed their prof-

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* Isa. xxxiii. 22.

perous state, and employed various means to chastise, humble and reclaim them, till these produced either their reformation or destruction. Have not such as tread in the same paths cause to dread a similar fate? Let none be deceived, God shall not be mocked: for they that sow to the flesh—that gratify their depraved appetites, shall thence reap corruption*. "The wages of sin is death†."

From the writings of Isaiah, and cotemporary prophets, it appears that the Jewish nation, at or during the period of his ministry, had become so profligate, rebellious, and obstinate, as to hate the means of reformation, and revolt more and more under them. Too well founded was the heavy charge brought against them in the introduction to his prophecy, which respects both their religious and political state and character: "Aha, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters, they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores‡." All ranks had perverted their ways, and the rulers both in church and state took the lead in the general apostacy, and refused to be reclaimed; whence their wound became incurable, and their case quite hopeless. O that this degrading character existed only in the prophet's description, and did not apply, with too much justice, to our own state and nation, notwithstanding our religious profession and uncommon advantages! Misery is the offspring of vice and irreligion. Sin is that abominable thing which God hates, and hath determined to punish; but he loveth and rewardeth righteousness. He sent his Son to suffer for the one, and his Spirit to produce the other; else we could not be eased from the burden of guilt, nor possessed of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

True and faithful are these sayings, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people," and, persisted in, will prove their ruin. "Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death. The wicked shall fall by his own wickedness; transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness||." Hence the prophet adds, "Your country is desolate, your cities are burnt with fire: your land strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate as over-

* Gal. vi. 8. † Rom. vi. 23. ‡ Isa. i. 4, 5, 6. || Prov. xiv. 34—xi. 4, 5, 6.

thrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city¶." Elsewhere the Lord himself is introduced expostulating with them, respecting the inefficacy of their costly sacrifices, and religious observances, which he assures them were, by reason of their abounding sins and impieties, vain, an abomination to him, yea, insufferable iniquity. Their very prayers and religious fasts, in which they were so apt to trust, as effectual means of averting or removing calamities, served only to aggravate their guilt, and accelerate their impending doom: because they fasted for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness†. A people may be very tenacious of the form of godliness, put themselves to trouble and expence to maintain this, and place a high value upon it, at the very time they are utter strangers to its essence, and, by their conduct, deny its power and native influence. The Jews abounded in ritual observances, and acts of public devotion, which, however, proceeded from the very worst of motives. These proved like the dead fly in the Apothecary's box of precious ointment, that causes it to send forth an unsavoury smell. They fasted and prayed with apparent devotion, but received not, "because they asked amiss, that they might consume it upon their lusts*" — their pride, ambition, cruelty, avarice and revenge. Hence the Lord tells them, "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood†." These things are written for our admonition, and not to regard them, would argue impiety and folly. Similar causes, whether natural, or moral, produce like effects: Who hath ever hardened himself against God, and hath prospered§?

The Most High, entertaining thoughts of mercy towards ancient Israel, whom he had redeemed from the house of bondage, visited their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes||. Though they still remained, in general, refractory and incorrigible, under the awful threatenings and chastisements of the Almighty; yet were there some among them, who beheld his hand when lifted up, humbled themselves under it, and became wiser and better by the means employed to punish their iniquities, and reform their manners. Such could say, in the expressive language of the text and context, "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee," &c. appealing same time to him the great searcher of

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¶ Isa. i. 3. † Isa. lviii. 4. * James iv. 3. § Isa. i. 15. § Job ix. 4.
|| Psa. lxxix. 33.

hearts, with respect to the truth of the assertion. Happy they who can, in such situations, adopt similar language, with equal truth and sincerity. Upon such, the judgements of Heaven are not lost, though for the present not joyous but grievous; for they produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

The term *judgment* admits of various acceptations in Scripture, but seems here to intend these calamities, wherewith a righteous God was provoked to visit the rebellious Jews, in the course of his providence, on account of their multiplied and aggravated transgressions, as the result of infinite wisdom and justice; a leading idea which that term conveys. From these calamities even the best of men are not exempted, one event, in this respect, being to all, tho' to them their nature and effects are quite changed. “The time is come saith Peter, that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel?” Our Lord is said to have been taken from prison and from judgment; meaning, probably, his sufferings and confinement in the tomb, as the determination of infinite wisdom, and the stern demand of incensed justice; and, in the context, the judgments of God are spoken of as abroad in the earth. The Apostle tells the church at Corinth, that “He who eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation, or, as rendered on the margin, judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” For this cause, adds he, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep[†]; that is, are chastised with infirmities, sickness, and death itself, for their irreverent conduct at the Lord’s supper. “Judgments, saith Solomon, are prepared for scorers, and stripes for the back of fools[‡],” where the last clause explains the preceding. The prophet Ezekiel uses the same term to denote the signal punishments that offended Heaven would inflict upon a guilty idolatrous people, by which it would appear, That verily there is a God who ruleth and judgeth in the earth. “I will make Pathros desolate, and will set fire in Zoan, and will execute judgments in No. Thus will I execute judgments in Egypt: and they shall know that I am the Lord.” In the farther prosecution of the subject, it is intended, if the Lord will,

I. To unfold the import of the exercise specified in the text.

II. Point out some of the special advantages resulting from it, which should recommend it to our observance.

* 2 Pet. iv. 17. † Isa. liii. 8. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 29, 30. || Prov. xix. 29.
§ Ezek. xxx. 15. 19.

III. Also direct the attention of my hearers to some of these judgments, in the way of which we are called to wait for God, in the present gloomy and eventful day.

IV. And then advert to some of the sins, which, there is just reason to fear, may be the procuring cause of such judgments;—Directing to some improvement.

"All scripture is profitable for instruction in righteousness;" but the subject under review is peculiarly so in the present solemn crisis. When the sins of a highly favoured, but rebellious and ungrateful people, and the judgments of Heaven, justly incensed on their account, with the due improvement to be made of these judgments, compose the awful theme, must we not allow, it hath a peculiar claim to our serious and unbiased attention, should we ourselves in fact be that people? The Lord saith of abounding sins, and of a guilty nation, "Shall I not visit for these things? shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation?" And does not the divine procedure towards the Jewish nation, during the whole period of their instructive history, exhibit, to all the nations of the earth, a standing memorial of the serious truth implied in this alarming question, namely, That national guilt is the certain forerunner of national judgments?

That the Lord's hand is at present lifted up, as it follows in the 11th verse, must appear to every one who is not willfully blind.—Have we not also reason to fear, from the culpable insensibility, and foreboding infatuation too visible among us, that the next clause is likewise verified, "They will not see"? But who can tell what farther and greater evils may yet overtake us, before the threatening couched in these words be executed, "But they shall see, and be ashamed." Neither the word nor providence of God shall return void. O that not only his glory, but also our due humiliation, and timely recovery from the evil of our ways, may be the happy consequence, and then will there be cause of joy in the issue. The only way to secure this, is to hear the language and admonitions of Heaven, howsoever spoken and tendered.

By our thus assembling in the courts of our God, upon his own day, we make solemn profession of our faith in, subjection to, and dependence upon him. The language of our hearts should therefore be, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth"; Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? and, with Cornelius, "Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that

are commanded thee of God." Whatever he commands his servants to speak in his name, that he requires his people should hear, or receive with faith, love and cheerful obedience; as they tender his favour, and would not incur the guilt of despising his authority, and rejecting his message, and the misery consequent upon such a conduct. " Go, said he of old to Jonah, and cry against Nineveh: for their wickedness is come up before me—preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee;||" not what carnal reason, or wordly policy might suggest, for listening to which he had been severely chastised. His word and providence are profitable, yea, sufficient to direct herein still; to point out the language, and due improvement of which, in season, is the great business of every Gospel minister. This duty neglected, or performed deceitfully, thro' that fear of man which causeth a snare, or a desire to conciliate his favour, tho' such conduct may be reputed wise and prudent upon earth, it shall not be guiltless in the sight of God, who is to be obeyed rather than man.

Seeing then, that there is nothing intended in the illustration of this important subject, but what was deemed highly worthy of our serious attention, both as men and Christians, would we hope to enjoy peace, and safety, when the judgments of the Almighty are abroad in the earth, to derive real advantage from them, and escape the dread effects of his displeasure beyond the grave, let prejudice and party spirit, so unworthy of the Christian character, be entirely laid aside, and reason, Scripture, and conscience allowed to speak: for agreeable to their united verdict shall be that final and decisive sentence which shall determine our eternal state. May He, who is the fountain and dispenser of all divine influences, enable so to speak and hear of a subject, in which we are all deeply interested, and in the discussion of which I feel myself not a little burdened, that we may be hid in his pavilion in evil days, spared as a man spareth his own son that serveth him, and have confidence before him amidst the frowns of his providence, and when he cometh to shake terribly the earth! Return we then, as proposed—

I. To unfold the import of the exercise specified in the text,—waiting for God in the way of his judgments.

The first thing I shall mention, as imported in this exercise, is, Serious inquiry respecting the procuring cause of these judgments wherewith a people may be visited. That the faithful

in ancient Israel were so exercised, under the afflicting hand of Heaven, appears from what is recorded in this chapter, and in many other passages of holy writ. Without such inquiry, it is, indeed, morally impossible to make a due improvement of such dispensations. As we are taught to expect trials, yea, many tribulations, of one kind or other, in our way to the heavenly kingdom, to exercise and improve our Christian graces; and are in effect addressed by them, Prepare yourselves to meet your God, it concerns us much to learn how we may become wiser and better by such events. The church and people of God have, in this, set us an example, the imitation of which is obligatory and beneficial. As trouble springeth not out of the dust, as God afflicts none willingly, it becomes us, under the corrections of his paternal hand, to consider our ways, that we may discover what hath been amiss, humbly confess it before him, and, by the aids of his grace, forsake it without delay. In such situations, we are addressed and exhorted by him who knows our frame and necessities, "Now therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways*;" or, as the margin of some of your Bibles more emphatically renders it, "Set your hearts on your ways;" seriously ponder their evil nature, fatal tendency, and deep demerit, like one who searches for some object he hath much at heart. To shew the necessity of this, and how averse we are to comply with such exhortations, it is repeated, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways." David tells us, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments†." His son Solomon makes it characteristic of fools, or obstinate sinner, that "They consider not that they do evil," or commit sin‡. Bray such fools in a mortar among wheat with a pestle,—beat them with many stripes; yet will not their foolishness depart from them||. God himself complains, "Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider§;" which at once constituted their guilt, and led to their apostacy and ruin.

As inconsideration betrays into sinful courses, and these again bring on chastisements; so chastisements are intended, and calculated, when sanctified of God, to excite a spirit of serious inquiry. Hence Job, under his affliction, saith, "I will say unto God, Do not condemn me, shew me wherefore thou contendest with me¶. To learn the cause of the awful controversy, was doubtless, with him, a matter of very serious concern. Sometimes indeed, the sin for which God contends may be read

* Hag. i. 5. † Psal. cxix. 59. ‡ Eccl. v. 1. || Prov. xxvii. 22. § Isa. i. 8.
¶ Job x. 2.

in its punishment, as the sin of David in the matter of Uriah, when his unnatural son Absalom defiled his father's concubines before all Israel: yet more frequently is it necessary to make diligent search, looking up to God for the aids of his Spirit in trying our hearts and ways. Without this, how can we be suitably exercised under the chastisements of providence, or make a due improvement of them? Mankind are prone to two great evils under affliction, both of which are to be equally avoided. Against these the wise man cautions, in an exhortation which speaketh unto us as unto children, " My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord: neither be weary of his correction;" or, as the Apostle has it, " nor faint when thou art rebuked of him*." The best are in danger of fainting under God's rebukes, especially if protracted; yet to despise these is peculiar to the ungodly, who are often under them furious and restless as a wild bull caught in a net. Few have ever been afflicted, but might own with David, " Before I was afflicted, I went astray," a discovery and deep sense of which, obtained under the rod, pave the way for adding, " but now have I kept thy word†." Or with Jeremiah, " It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth‡."

As no wise parent will chastise his child without reason, or some blame previously incurred, and proposing his amendment; so our heavenly Father corrects men for their profit, that they may be reclaimed from their evil ways, and become partakers of his holiness. He may, no doubt, chastise for the exercise and improvement of the graces of patience, resignation to the divine will and the like, as in the case of Job and others; yet is it safe and prudent to consider sin, of one kind or other, as the procuring cause, and to be at pains to learn the particular sin, or sins that may have called forth the corrections of the Almighty. When it is found productive of such bitter fruits, as an earnest of still worse, if persisted in, this ought, and naturally will, thro' the co-operating influence of divine grace, excite hatred of it, and earnest endeavours to forsake it, in heart and life; begetting, meanwhile, longing desires after that state, where they shall neither sin nor sorrow any more. Happy they who thus improve the judgments of Heaven, waiting for God in the way of them, instead of acting under them like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, or a wild bull caught in the toils; which is the too frequent conduct of obstinate transgressors, and sinful nations.

It may be observed also, That waiting for God in the way of

* Prov. 3. 11. Heb. 12. 5. † Psal. 119. 67. ‡ Lam. 3. 27.

his judgments, imports a conviction and acknowledgment of the wisdom and equity of his procedure in them. Such conviction will be the fruit and consequence of the serious inquiry adverted to in the preceding particular. When troubles and calamities, under the Divine administration, are termed judgments, this may be intended to denote, that they are the result of wisdom and justice, not the expressions of a selfish, or revengeful spirit; which cannot be always said of the punishments inflicted under human governments. These penal evils are the calm decisions of a wise and righteous Judge carried into effect—a Judge who weighs the actions of men in an equal balance, and never punishes beyond the demerit of their conduct. This every intelligent being shall one day see, and every tongue confess to the glory of God. While these judgments afford displays of the justice, veracity and holiness of the divine nature, and of the wisdom and equity of the divine administration, whence they appear to proceed from, and be worthy of God, as the righteous governor and judge of the world; they also present us with a pledge and earnest of a future judgment, where whatever is now inscrutable or perplexing, in the works and ways of God, shall be fully unfolded. Sin is sometimes punished in the present state, that mankind may be convinced that verily there is a God who ruleth and judgeth in the earth; yet is it only sometimes, that they might not be tempted to call in question the certainty of a future state of retribution. In both cases the Divine conduct is wise and just, of which an enlightened mind is fully convinced, in contemplating the dispensations of the Almighty.

That the Judge of all the earth shall do right*, is a general maxim, to the truth of which, every one will readily assent: yet, should his hand lie heavy upon us, cordially to acquiesce in the wisdom and equity of his procedure, is neither an easy nor common attainment. The righteous only thus acquiesce, from a conviction of the evil nature, and immense guilt of sin, aggravated by a sense of the divine goodness and love even in the most adverse events. When Nadab and Abihu were devoured by fire, that went out from the Lord, because they presumed to offer strange fire on his altar, which he commanded them not, and probably, to approach it in a state of intoxication, we are told that Aaron their father held his peace†; convinced, that awful as this stroke was, it was however, wise and just. “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it,” was the humble carriage and acknowledgment

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* Gen. xviii. 5. † Levit. x. 5. || Psal. xxxii. 9. |

of another eminent saint, under the rod of his heavenly Father. Similar was the temper discovered by the man who had seen affliction, " Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord. Let us lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens. We have transgressed and have rebelled;" and also of Ezra, that reformer in Israel, " After all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, thou our God, hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve." The prophet Micah exhibits, for our imitation, the same frame of mind, animated by that hope to which it gives birth: " I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness."

The great Captain of our salvation, who was made perfect thro' unexampled sufferings, hath in this, as in other things, set us an example, that we might learn of him, and find rest to our souls. After enumerating several ingredients in that bitter cup, which could not pass from him till he drank it to the very dregs; he expresses the view and sense which he had of the conduct of his heavenly Father, in all that he was called to endure. " But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them, ¶ &c." Tho' the Lord's way is often in the sea, when he corrects his people, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known; yet they rest satisfied that he does all things well, —that all things shall work together for their good, according to his promise; yea, that the severest chastisements of his hand are to be viewed as disguised blessings. Such smiting, they know, shall not wound their head, nor separate betwixt them and their God, who is their light in darkness, their strength in weakness, their consolation, refuge, strength, and present help in trouble*, and their life and hope even in death. " He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct" his own people, whom he hath taken under his immediate tuition? His right to do so, they humbly acknowledge, devoutly kiss the rod that smites them, and adore him who appoints it.

Not seldom indeed, are they unfit to judge of the wisdom and expediency of the events in their lot; yea, perhaps they may be apt to imagine, like Jacob in a certain case, that these are all militating against them, when in reality they

§ Lam. iii. 39.—42. † Ezra ix. 13. || Micah vii. 9. ♦ Psalm xxii. 3, 4.
§§ Ps. lxxvii. 19. †† Rom. viii. 28. * Psal. xlvi. 1. † Psal. xciv. 30.

are contributing to their best interest, and necessary, like the links of a chain, one of which cannot be broken without destroying the connexion of the whole. They should therefore, learn to trust their unerring guide in the dark, who leads the blind in a way they know not, makes crooked things straight before them, and rough places smooth; deriving comfort from their Lord's saying to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Their own subsequent experience often corrects former mistakes, and serves to shew how very groundless and unjustifiable their fears frequently are. But when they attain the wise and happy exercise of the Jewish church in the text and context, a conviction of the wisdom, the equity, and even the love of God in these judgments reconciles the mind to them, and keeps the heart in perfect peace under them. Were a people thus exercised, when visited with the just corrections of the Almighty, might they not indulge the pleasing hope, that he would turn again their captivity as the streams in the south, and make them glad according to the days wherein he had afflicted them, and the years wherein they have seen evil ¶.

I would farther remark, that waiting for God in the way of his judgments, imports our receiving these as fatherly corrections, kindly intended for our benefit and improvement. That they are really meant as such, and productive of such effects, in those who are rightly exercised by them, both scripture and experience fully evince. What God said, to this effect, to his people of old, is addressed to such in every age: " You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities;" not surely with a view to destroy but reform them. " Whom the Lord loveth, saith the Apostle, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son, whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of Spirite, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby*." The

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¶ John xiii. 17.

¶ Psalm. cxvi. 4.—xc. 15.

* Heb. xii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

§ Amos iii. 2.

people of God, in every age, experience to their comfort, " That tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them." Of Messiah's seed it is said, " If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." Under this salutary discipline, they are not however, left to sorrow as they that have no hope; for he adds, " Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." To the Redeemer as the Head of his mystical body the Church, these promises are made, and, through him, their accomplishment is infallibly secured to all the members: for in the eye of law and justice, he and they are one.

In seasons of affliction, whether of a more public or private nature, Christians have not only the doctrines and promises of Scripture for their guide and stay, but also the example of the faithful in all ages, and especially of Christ himself, who once trode, and paved for us the rough and thorny path,—" was oppressed, and afflicted, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Hence they argue with Job, " What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?—The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." And with their Saviour, " The cup which our Father hath given us shall we not drink it?" They indeed feel, in common with others, that no affliction is for the present joyous but grievous, yet know they are intended, and calculated, through the divine blessing, to produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness. When they reflect that their light afflictions, which are but for a moment—which are indeed light and momentary compared to their deserts, and what others, especially their Redeemer hath endured, and put in balance with the pains and horrors of Eternity, shall work out for them a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory, can they but adore the friendly hand that smites them, and the wisdom which orders every circumstance in their lot? Tho' often afflicted, and sometimes apparently forsaken of God, yet are they taught, by the example of Jesus, and his saints, still to cleave to him, with full purpose of heart, as theirs in an everlasting covenant, not to be forgotten, and to plead with him respecting his judg-

[†] Rom. v. 3, 4, 5.

[‡] Psal. lxxxix. 30, 31, 32,

[•] Job. ii. 10.—i. 21.

[§] John xviii. 11.

ments: " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent." " I will say unto God my rock, why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy.*" " What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth? Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me; Lord, be thou my helper." " O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence." " How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? Consider, and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death†. As to Jesus the head, so to his people, the members, God gives songs in the darkest night of adversity, will command his loving kindness in the day-time, and in this night his song, with them, and their prayer to him the God of their life; even when deep calleth unto deep at the noise of his water-spouts: and all his waves and billows go over them‡. Hence the propriety of that exhortation, " Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.§"

Such may join mirth with their trembling, who can say with David, " Altho' my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, altho' he make it not to grow,"** tho' he should not cause my family and kingdom to prosper. They who wait for God in the way of his judgments, generally find, that the rod of affliction, like Aaron's rod of old, will bud, blossom, and bear precious fruit;—that, as in the ark of the covenant, the manna of divine consolation is close by it. They find it good for them to have borne their Redeemer's easy yoke and light burden,—to have followed him thro' bad report, like Moses his type, " Chooing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, the riches of the world; " for they have respect unto the recompence of the reward††. How noble and generous this

* Psal. xxii. 1, 2. * Psal. xlii. 9. † Psal. xxx. 9, 10.—xxxix. 13.—xiii. 1, 2, 3.

|| Job xxxv. 10.—Psal. xlvi. 8, 7. § Psal. lxx. 4, 5. ¶ 2 Sam. xxii. 5.

†† Heb. xi. 25, 26.

temper and choice, contrasted with that of the men of the world! The prudent of the earth may indeed tax their temper as mean, and their choice as foolish; but both are dignified and wise: for their great and good King corrects and reigns over them only to make them happy. The following and similar gracious promises, the staff of their hope, and the standard of their prospects, they find made good in the time of need; "As thy days, so shall thy strength be—My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness," whence the apostle infers and resolves, "Most gladly therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me!"—"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." The saints on earth, and the church triumphant in heaven, who have come out of great tribulations, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, all unite in bearing testimony to the goodness and faithfulness of God toward his afflicted people; whence they could one time or other adopt the language of holy Paul; "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." No wonder then they should receive the judgments of God, so far as concerned in them, as fatherly corrections, meant and calculated to advance their spiritual and eternal prosperity. "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth." "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law: that thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked."[¶]

The devout and prudent exercise alluded to in the passage under consideration, must likewise import, serious attention to the hand of God in his judgments, and the pious acknowledgment of his interposition, leading to expect deliverance only in his own time and way. The wicked acknowledge God neither in their prosperity, nor adversity. If prosperous, "They sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag: because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous."[†] If afflicted, they despise the chastening of the Lord, overlook his hand, and, like Pharaoh, become more obdurate under the rod; or remain stupid, and unconcerned, like Nabal, having their heart, in respect of good, dead, senseless, and impenetrable as a stone. Or they are peevish, murmur, and fret, confiding in, or blaming second causes, like the dog that snarls at the stone that strikes him, without adverting to the hand

[†] Deut. xxxiii. 25.—2 Cor. xii. 9.—Psal. xlvi. 1.
¶ 2 Cor. iv, 8, 9. || Job v. 17.—Psal. xciv. 12, 13. § Hab. i. 16.

which throws it—The goodness of God leads them not to repentance, nor excites gratitude in return, and they remain unhumbed under his mighty hand, even when it is depressing them to the dust. Thus “they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, whence he shall destroy them and not build them up.” Of this conduct the prophet complains in the 11th verse of the chapter where our text lies, and laments it to God himself as not only wicked but fatal; “Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people, yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.” The want of will, or inclination to see the Lord’s hand, when lifted up in taking vengeance, is here the ground of complaint, and not the want of a visive faculty: For none are so blind, according to the common saying, as those who will not see.

From the last clause of the verse above quoted, you see that the great Lord of all threatens to employ the fire of his enemies to devour, or consume his professing people, when they neglect or refuse to give heed to the afflictive operations of his providence. What he thus threatens, he hath often executed, and may still accomplish among the nations. Men do not usually make choice of the most honourable characters to be the executioners of public justice, however necessary these ministers of government may be, in the present corrupted state of society: and under the Divine administration, the refuse of mankind, in a moral view, even the avowed enemies of God, are often selected to execute his vengeance on a gain-saying and rebellious people; and when they have done their work, are themselves not seldom punished for the unworthy motives by which they have been actuated in executing it. Nebuchadnezzar, and his Chaldeans were the rod in God’s hand, his servants and sanctified ones, for so he stiles them*, to administer justice for him upon his apostate people; and the Roman forces that destroyed Jerusalem, put an end to their civil and religious polity, and spread horror and desolation over the whole land of Judea, are expressly called his armies†, sent forth to destroy the murderers of his Son, and burn up their city, as a just punishment procured by their conduct. This they did not, indeed, intend, neither came it into their heart; for they meant to serve themselves, but God had his ends also to accomplish. At the time both nations were gross idolaters, and utter strangers to the God of Israel.

When the pot-sherds of the earth scorn to be vessels of mercy.

* Isa. x. 5.—xiii. 5. † Mat. xxiii. 7. ¶ Psal. xxviii. 5.

fitted for the Master's use, or neglect the means of becoming such, it is just with him to make their mutual unnatural bickerings and collisions the mean of their mutual destruction; —to employ them against each other as an iron rod wherewith they are broken in pieces like a potter's vessel. So said God the Father to his Anointed, “ Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.” As soon may such a vessel effectually resist the iron rod, at the first stroke of which it must fly in pieces; as the most potent on earth be able to oppose the Almighty. Hence such are cautioned and exhorted, “ Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little; blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”^t The irresistible power and inflexible justice of Messiah's kingdom constitute that iron rod wherewith he rules his incorrigible enemies, and will one day make them to feel the pressure of his mighty arm. What did Pharaoh, Herod, and the Jews gain by resisting his will, and refusing to wait for him in the way of his judgments? When he enters into judgment, he will prevail; for who would set briars, and thorns before him in battle? “ The power of Christ will be manifested in all, by the destruction either of sin, or the sinner. The hearts which now yield to the impressions of his Spirit, are broken only in order to be formed anew, and to become vessels of honour, fitted for the Master's use. Those which continue stubborn and hardened, must be dashed in pieces by the stroke of eternal vengeance.” Such will be the fate of those who remain strangers to the exercise specified in the text.

But while the simple, the fools who say in their heart,—No God*, as expressive of their wish, not their conviction, go on blindly in ways of their own devising, and are punished: the righteous have their eyes in their forehead, foresee the evil in its approach, and while they hide themselves, own the hand of God, and give him the glory of their protection. They discern the signs of the times, see in abounding sins awful prognostications of approaching and impending judgments. While hatred of sin, and love to God, lead them to lament the one, compassion for their fellow men will induce them to deprecate the other. Comparing the events of Providence, with the oracles of truth, which serve to illustrate and confirm each other, they are enabled to form some opinion of the Lord's operations, under the guidance of his Holy Spirit, and in these to trace his

* Psal. ii. 9, 10, 11, 12.

* Psa. xiv. 1.

mighty hand. When that hand is lifted up in a threatening attitude, they perceive it with solemn awe; and, when conscience smites, with no small dread and anxiety; as “David saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem.” On that memorable occasion, he acted in conformity to Peter’s exhortation, and experienced the divine goodness in fulfilling the annexed promise: or, in the language of our text, waited for God in the way of his judgments. “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.” Hear his own humble deprecation, while he and the elders of Israel were clothed in sackcloth, and fallen upon their faces; so unlike the conduct of Balaam in a similar case, when an angel withheld him in his guilty career. “David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O Lord my God, be on me, and on my father’s house, but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.” Do princes always exemplify such a spirit, while their people suffer, perhaps in consequence of their own measures?

As the church or people of God see his hand in the afflictions that befall them in life, so they acknowledge it, in the exercise of humble submission, whether these afflictions be immediately from himself, or by the intervention of second causes. This they own in the text, “Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee.” Suppose the prophet refers to some national calamity, the invasion of Judea by the Assyrian or Chaldean army, the Babylonish captivity, or some other public disaster; still he acknowledges the special providence of Heaven in their chastisement;—“thy judgments, O Lord;” and patiently waiteth for him in the path of duty—Thus when Shimei cursed David, that afflicted patriarch said to those about him who were for taking immediate revenge; “Let him alone, and let him curse: for the Lord hath bidden him;”—that is, he permits and over-rules the malignity of his temper, and the disloyalty of his heart for my correction. Job too, whose patience under accumulated and diversified calamities, exhibits a pattern for our imitation to this day, tho’ these originated from very different parties, yet overlooking these, he takes all from God himself; “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” The same happy spirit ap-

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[†] 1 Chron. xxi. 16. ^{||} 1 Pet. v. 6, 7. [§] 1 Chron. xxi. 17. [¶] 2 Sam. xvi. 11.

peared in the patriarch Joseph, when reasoning with his brethren respecting their conduct towards him, and its effects; and our blessed Lord, tho' Herod, Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, conspired against him, and had taken an active hand in his sufferings and death; yet views these as a cup given him by his heavenly Father, and assigns this as a reason why he should drink it. While the prophet Habakkuk laments the desolations of his country, and the accumulated miseries of his countrymen,—that their enemies were swift as eagles to pursue, and fierce as lions to tear and devour; yet he allows that to all this they had received a commission—“ When he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.”

Those who duly acknowledge the Lord's hand in his judgments, will patiently wait his time and mode of deliverance, exercising, meanwhile, resignation to the Divine will under all that they may be called to endure. They will not, they dare not say, like that infidel prince of old, “ Behold, this evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer?” A strange inference from his own acknowledgment! Since he saw and owned the evil—the sore famine wherewith he and his people were visited, to be of the Lord, he should have rather said, I will wait for him in the way of his judgments, “ for he is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him.” Every rising thought that would arraign the procedure of Heaven, the real Christian will check with that reproof of the apostle, “ Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?” As he dreads to tax the wisdom or equity of his past proceedings, so will he not venture to prescribe to him respecting the future. With regard to both, he is taught to say, Not my will, Lord, but thine be done; “ Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.” As the righteous are careful not to incur trouble by their own foolish or wicked conduct, so they will not attempt to avoid affliction, or get free from it, at the expence of duty and conscience, when sent by their heavenly Father.

It is mentioned as the sin of Asa king of Judah, that “ in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians*;” and when Saul could receive no answer from God, by the usual means of consulting him, he had recourse to Satan—consulted the witch at Endor, whose diabolic art, he himself had forbidden upon pain of death. Too apt is sinful man, proud of his own wisdom, to seek relief under his afflictions, or deliverance from them, by means of his own devising, and in courses con-

* Hab. iii. 26.

† 2 Kings. vi. 23.

‡ 2 Chron. xxvii. 12.

deemed of Heaven. How memorable the saying of David, when driven from his palace and capital, by the rebellion of his unnatural son Absalom, and what a pattern of resignation does it present! " And the king said unto Zadok, carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee: behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." When Eli heard from young Samuel the fearful doom which God had pronounced, and threatened to execute upon his house, the aged saint, with awful reverence, and humble submission, replies—" It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." The afflicted yet patient Job breathes the same spirit, " Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? and who shall say unto him, What dost thou?" And saith an apostle, " Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord: that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." " The vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: tho' it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry—at evening time it shall be light." Tarry it may beyond the time our fond wishes would prescribe, but shall not beyond that period which infinite wisdom hath fixed: for the Lord will arise, and have mercy upon Zion, when the set time to favour her is come; and then will he regard the prayer of the destitute. All the days of our appointed time of suffering, in this vale of tears, should we wait, like Job, till our change come; and, by a patient continuance in well-doing, and in submission to the divine will, seek not only glory and immortality beyond the grave, but also peace and comfort amidst present troubles, and complete deliverance from them at length. " The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. For the Lord will not cast off for ever. But tho' he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men**." What encouragement to wait for the Lord, in the way of his judgments, in the pious exercise of faith and patience, resignation and hope!

A fixed concern and earnest endeavour to be suitably exercised under the judgments of Heaven, must doubtless, con-

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† 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. § 1 Sam. iii. 18. || James v. 11.

§ Hab. ii. 3.—Zech. xiv. 17. ¶ Psal. cii. 13, 14.

** Lam. iii. 25, 26, 31, 32, 33.

stitute one part of the exercise or duty specified in the text. Without this, what valuable purpose can be answered, on our part, by these judgments? They must make us either better, or worse, prove, like the word, the favour either of life unto life, or of death unto death—the mean of promoting our salvation, or making us more the heirs of hell than we were before. When men continue impenitent, secure and unreformed under the rod of correction, what we find addressed to the Jews, at the beginning of this prophecy, will apply to them, “Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more.” But such is none of the spots of God’s children. As they are anxious to know why he contends with them, to learn the ground of his controversy, the procuring cause of his judgments; so they feel and cherish a cordial concern to have their hearts suitably affected in such situations. Hence it is their uniform desire and fervent prayer, that God would sanctify the rod of affliction, enlighten their eyes before they sleep the sleep of death, and spare them to recover strength before they go hence. They lament their own sins as contributing to the general provocation, and the sins of the community of which they are members, sighing and crying, like the few faithful in Ezekiel’s days, “for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof,” whence they are marked for preservation in the day of the Lord’s fierce anger. While they foresee and dread, they also deprecate the evil day, and feel the most pungent sorrow at the blindness, and carnal security of their fellow men, under the impending judgments of Heaven. Their sensibilities of heart on such occasions often lead them, especially if invested with any public function, to express themselves in a manner surprising to some, and offensive to others. They speak because they believe, and out of the abundance of the heart; yet wish their fears may be disappointed, tho’ at the expence of demonstrating the futility of their warnings and admonitions. While Noah built an ark to the saving of his household, and found protection in it from the overwhelming deluge, he, no doubt, felt even for those who despised his warnings; as did also Lot, while he beheld the smoke of the cities of the plain ascending towards heaven as the smoke of a great furnace. Happy are they however, in having their own souls given them for a prey.

Such as properly wait on God in these situations, will not content themselves with a few faint wishes, or feeble endeavours; for they continue steadfast, and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, inasmuch as they know that their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; like the olive

tree, which, as some tell us, the more it is pressed down, the deeper it strikes its roots, and spreads its boughs the wider. They are more concerned that these trying events work together for the glory of God, and the good of his church and people, yea, of mankind in general, than that they themselves should be either exempted, or speedily delivered from their pressure. With their soul, as it follows in the 9th verse, do they desire him in the night—the dark, and, for what earth can yield, joyless night of adversity; and with their spirit within them will they seek him early,—so soon as the morning of their prosperity appeareth, not forgetting the benefits of the God of their salvation; importing that all the powers of the mind, and affections of the heart were engaged in the pious exercise. What is mentioned in the 16th verse was exceeding proper for a people in their situation, had they been sincere and upright, and, to this, added perseverance; “Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.” The same may be said of what we find recorded of their conduct upon another occasion; “When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer.” These were hopeful beginnings, but alas! soon did they prove as a morning cloud, and early dew that passeth away; “Nevertheless, adds the Psalmist, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant†.”

As the primary intention of divine judgments, or chastisements, is the reformation, not the destruction of sinners, this being only an incidental effect, in consequence of their wilful blindness and obstinacy: so those who are rightly exercised under these, or wait for God in the way of them, will be anxious not only to see, but also to break off their sins by repentance, and their iniquities by doing righteously. Even pure minds need to be stirred up by way of remembrance; for providence admonishes as well as the word, and the midnight cry, announcing the approach of the Bridegroom, was alarming to the wise as well as to the foolish virgins. While these were confounded at the solemn cry, when they found no oil in their vessels with their lamps, and their lamps gone out; and were repulsed on their application, “Lord, Lord, open to us,” with, “Verily I say unto you, I know you not; Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of man cometh*.” The wise were aroused to trim their lamps, and to go

† Psal. lxxviii. 34, 35, 36, 37. * Mat. xxv. 12, 13.

out to meet the Bridegroom at his coming, with their loins girded about and their lamps burning. The misery of multitudes is, that they begin not to seek God in earnest till too late,—when they cry, but there is none to save them; even unto the Lord, but he answereth them not^f. It is too late to knock, when the door is finally shut; too late to cry for mercy, when it gives place to incensed justice. Let us then “seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near,” and not begin to pray only, when prayer shall be no longer heard,—when God may be provoked to laugh at our calamity, and mock when our fear cometh sudden and irresistible as a whirlwind*.

The judgments of the Most High enforce such admonitions as these on our hearts,—Be ye also ready, for in an hour when ye think not, the Son of man cometh—Let your moderation be known to all men; for the Lord is at hand—the Judge is at the door. Influenced by these considerations, the righteous, wherein they have done iniquity, study to do so no more, to forsake every foolish and sinful way, shake off remissness and lukewarmness in the service of their God, and return to the paths of truth, piety, and righteousness, with full purpose of heart. When by afflictions, their corruptions are purged away, their faith tried and strengthened, their patience perfected, their brethren edified, and their Master glorified, they answer the ends proposed, and are not in vain in the Lord. Often are they made the mean of restoring the soul, mortifying corruption, enlivening the graces of the Spirit, deadening our affections to the world, and causing to walk in the ways of wisdom, which are pleasantness and peace. That afflictions may answer these important ends, is the heart's desire, and frequent and fervent prayer of those who are rightly exercised by them.

The Christian temper is far from being a contracted and selfish one. Those who wait for God in such situations, will not fail to feel for, and sympathize with those who suffer by his judgments, whether they be friends, or enemies, countrymen or foreigners; tho' they themselves should be in absolute safety. With what yearnings of compassion did Jeremiah lament the desolations of his country, and the slaughter of its inhabitants? “ Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.” The causes of their calamity he assigns, for they were all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men, who bended their tongues like their bow for lies: but were not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they

^f Psal. xviii. 41.

* Isa. lv. 6.—Prov. i. 26. 27.

proceeded from evil to evil, and had no knowledge of the Lord. Elsewhere he gives vent to the pungent feelings which the horrid scenes of war excited in his breast; " My bowels, my bowels; I am pained at my very heart, my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet?" This was acting like a true patriot, who had the prosperity of his country at heart, and mourned in secret for the sins of his people, and the judgments they procured, of which war was not the least; at the very time he was traduced, arraigned, and shut up in a dungeon, by the rulers of that country, for sedition, disloyalty, and befriending their enemies. Thro' the whole of his Lamentations, the same benevolent spirit breathes, nor was it peculiar to him, but common with the other prophets.

Ezekiel, when he saw in vision six men, each with his slaughter weapon in his hand, betokening, probably, the leaders of the Chaldean army, and heard their dread commission,—" Go thro' the city and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have pity. Slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women; and begin at my sanctuary;" and also beheld the execution of the fatal mandate, tho' he was one of those marked for preservation; yet he fell prostrate to the ground, deprecating the awful doom—" Ah, Lord God! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel, in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?" How genuine and disinterested these expressions of brotherly love? Could the frequent warnings and prayers of these patriotic worthies ward off the impending blow, their country, cities and temple would have remained a quiet habitation; and indeed, had they not unhappily slighted the former, they would have, doubtless reaped the benefit of the latter. But a people may arrive at such a measure of iniquity, that God will not hear the most highly favoured of his servants in their behalf.

How noble, generous and benevolent the temper discovered above, compared to that often manifested among professing Christians in modern times! When tidings are brought that some hundreds or thousands have been left dead, wounded and

* Jer. ix. 1, 2, 3.—iv. 19, 20, 21.

† It is recorded in the life of the pious Flavel, that at the very time when he was burned in effigy in the town that enjoyed the benefit of his ministerial labours, owing to the unhappy spirit of these times, he was employed in supplicating the God of heaven in behalf of the inhabitants.

‡ Ezek. ix.

mangled in the bloody field, how are these heavy tidings received? What effects do they produce? Are they heard with tears and lamentation? Are amusements and pomp laid aside, and mourning apparel worn? for a time of war should be a period of universal mourning. No such thing. Hostilities, which threaten the lives of unknown myriads, and the happiness of millions, usually commence amidst an almost universal apathy and unconcernedness. In their progress, while the sword devours its thousands, and tens of thousands, individuals, bereaved of their dear relatives, may weep—the forlorn widow and orphan may mourn a husband and a father prematurely lost,—ah! lost to them for ever: but the uneasy sensations of those who, in one view, are chiefly concerned, if they have any, for the untimely death, or maimed limbs of their civil children and guardians, are soon extinguished over a flowing glass, or amidst the fashionable amusements of the theatre, the yell of hounds, and the noise and bustle of the chace. Do such exclaim, with the prophet, upon the heavy tidings of bloodshed and slaughter, “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of my people!” If the premature and violent death of friends give little or no sorrow, no wonder the calamities and fall of enemies should create joy.

He who gave the precept, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you: that ye may be,” or approve yourselves, “the children of your Father which is in heaven;” also exemplified it in his own conduct, no doubt often in his life, but especially when he spent his expiring breath in prayer for his very murderers; “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!” How amiable, generous and forgiving his deportment, when he wept over that wicked and rebellious city Jerusalem, at the dread prospect of her impending doom, tho’ he forefaw the inhabitants would in a few days imbrue their hands in his precious blood! Are we not in this, as in other things, called to learn of him, or to copy his example? But should any suppose that this is an instance of virtue too sublime for imitation, let us for a moment advert to the behaviour of the prophet already referred to, who expressed the same benevolent and philanthropic temper, long before our Lord appeared in the flesh. Jeremiah was commissioned as a prophet to foretel and denounce the wrath of Heaven against the enemies of his country, the Philistines; yet he feels for them as fellow men, and warmly deprecates the threatened

† Mat. v. 44, 45.

doom. "O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabard; rest and be still. How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea-shore? there hath he appointed it?"

The inhabitants of Ashkelon and the sea-shore were the rooted, and avowed enemies of Israel, who were ever ready to wage war against them. They were also gross idolaters, and, of course, enemies to the God of Israel. Their sins were exceeding great, on account of which the Lord gave charge to his sword against them, whence the prophet could have no doubt of the justice, if not of the necessity of a war that must prove to them so destructive. And yet, instead of rejoicing that Pharaoh king of Egypt would thus cut off, or exterminate the enemies of his country, and praying that his armies might be covered in the day of battle, and be successful in shedding blood; by an usual but elegant figure, he accosts the devouring sword, "O thou sword of the Lord, how long wilt it be ere thou be quiet?" Did this proceed from disloyalty to his prince, or disaffection to his native land? The very reverse appears from all his writings; tho' the princes and rulers accused him of both, and cast him into a dungeon; because he had the patriotism, fidelity and courage to declare the truth, and give the only counsel that could secure the stability of the throne, and prolong the tranquility of the state. Tho' enemies, he regarded them as fellow creatures, the offspring of the same common Father, and the objects of his paternal care: and therefore, neither difference in religion, avowed enmity to his nation, aggravated by continued hostilities, nor enmity to the God of Israel, the very worst things that can be pleaded in vindication of modern national antipathies, could suppress his compassion for them as men, while in the discharge of his important trust, he denounced against them the vengeance of his God. Tho' he foretold, he was far from desiring their evil day; for he was an utter stranger to that barbarous refinement of modern times, which leads many of the professed disciples of the meek and merciful Jesus, to rejoice in the slaughter of their fellow men, and pray that Heaven would go forth with fleets and armies for that purpose; and to present devout thanks to the Father of the spirits of all flesh, if they have been successful in multiplying the miseries of mankind, and sending myriads of them prematurely to the grave. O man, how art thou fallen!

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If the instruments of death have destroyed only a few hundreds, the matter is suffered to pass with little notice; but if so many thousands have been made to bite the dust, to use a modern phrase, tho' an equal number of their own friends may have breathed their last, the joyful tidings fly from post to post, and quickly spread thro' city and village. Flags are displayed, bone-fires kindled, the churches are crowded — Te Deums, hymns of thanksgiving are chanted, and the evening concludes the scene, probably with balls, illuminations, and ringing of bells. Not only fellow men, but the Deity himself is made a party in the sanguinary triumph, as if he could be delighted with the misery and slaughter of thousands of his offspring and subjects, their own brethren too, because the rulers of the respective hostile states happen to be at variance. "Tell it in not Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughter of the uncircumcised triumph." Such are the immediate fruits of war, that the most successful hero, if not lost to humanity, may weep in surveying the trophies of his victory.

Is such the use that ought to be made of the judgments of Heaven? the proper mode of waiting for God in the course of these judgments? Such as express unhallowed joy on occasions of this nature, have reason to fear that a righteous God, the Governor among the nations, may yet make them to weep and wail, while others have similar cause of joy in their calamities; for the very worst of men have a claim to our compassion, when the hand of God lies heavy upon them; and they who would deny this, or shut up their bowels of compassion on such occasions, have reason to suspect that they are of their father the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning, and delights in scenes of human misery and wo. While the world triumphs in its own way, let the children of Zion's King never be ashamed to copy such bright examples as have been referred to above, in expressing their sorrows and joys: for tho' they may be condemned by those who delight in war, or have no proper sense of its evils, they shall be approved of God, and enjoy the testimony of their own conscience. —

We ought likewise to contemplate the terrible operations of Divine providence with solemn awe and dread upon our minds, —considering whose works they are, and the procuring cause of them; and also to give God the glory which they demand of the sons of men. We cannot wait upon him aright, in the way of these operations, unless thus exercised. When the most High utters his voice in the thunder of his ire, shakes the nations, rises from his seat to punish the inhabitants of the earth, and addresses them in tremendous accents, with what awe and reverence should they attend to the import of his language,

and the nature of the operation of his hands? When the lion roareth, the inhabitants of the forest tremble; and what heart is not appalled, when the God of glory thundereth with that voice which is full of power and majesty? The voice of God in the kingdom of nature, providence and grace is mighty in operation, and produceth similar effects. Thunder and lightning in the former, and the word of God in the latter, rend, shake, pierce, melt and make manifest; and were not the threatenings of Scripture, and the terrible events of his providence tempered with mercy, as the lightning is with its concomitant rain, what flesh could stand before them? When he spoke from heaven by his apostles, those sons of spiritual thunder, what power, what effects accompanied the word! As the Lord's powerful and majestic voice in the heavens divides the flames of fire, and sheds them abroad; from the clouds, in the terrible form of lightning, that sharp and glittering sword of the Almighty, which no substance can withstand: so the word of truth, that sword of the Spirit, is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow. As a hammer, it breaks the rock, the heart of stone in pieces, and as a fire it melts, enlightens inflames, the more noble powers, and consumes the grosser appetites. His voice in the kingdoms of men is often no less awful in its nature, and expressive in its import; claiming, along with his word and works, our attention and reverence, and demanding our submission and obedience. Hence the Psalmist introduces, in the 29th psalm, a sublime description of the power, majesty, and effects of God's voice in the natural world, by calling upon the mighty or potentates of the earth to give glory to Jehovah, and to the voice or word of his power.

Jehovah is a God of terrible majesty, and his works shew him to be girded about with strength. Who can peruse the narrative of his terrific works in Egypt, at the red sea, in the wilderness, and in the punishment of the wicked Canaanites, and not feel his mind impressed with solemn awe? These events shew the majesty, the justice, the power and sovereignty of the Lord of hosts, in the most expressive manner; and claim for him the glory which is due to his sacred name. In the sufferings and cross of Jesus, when he was under the judgment of Heaven, a scene still more solemn and interesting is exhibited to our view; upon the survey of which, how pertinent the question, "If such things were done in the green tree, what

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shall be done in the dry?" Here mercy and truth, righteousness and peace met and embraced each other; and thence peace is proclaimed on earth, and good-will toward men. Yet, in surveying the cross of Jesus, we are to weep, not for him the illustrious sufferer, but for ourselves, our children, and fellow-men, who may be still exposed to the wrath of Heaven. When the prophet Habakkuk had his thoughts directed to the judgments of the great Arbiter of the universe in his day, how was he affected? "When I heard, my belly trembled: my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble*."

When the Psalmist invites us to contemplate the desolating works of Providence, he introduces the Lord himself imposing reverential silence, and calm attention to the ultimate end of these works—his exaltation among the heathen, and in the earth: "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth, he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder, he burneth the chariot in the fire." To commence hostilities and bloodshed in the earth, nothing farther is necessary than to set the lusts and passions of men, that wage war in their members, at work: but nothing short of a divine interposition can terminiate these; and such interpositions claim our attention and gratitude. "Be still," adds he, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth! When the alarmed Hebrews were closely pursued by the disappointed and enraged Egyptian host, environed on either hand by inaccessible mountains, and presented in front by the red sea, Moses accousts them, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew you to-day; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace†." That salvation which they were called to expect with awful silence, proved a dreadful judgment to the haughty and menacing pursuers, leaving them neither root nor branch: while it afforded a grand theme for a sublime and triumphant song to the rescued tribes of Israel. Thus, tho' their weeping endured for a night, joy came in the morning, and they were called to join mirth with their trembling,—to adore the Lord, whose mighty arm had archieved for them the decisive victory, and celebrate the displays of his power, justice, and mercy on that memorable occasion, in a song that should perpetuate the fame of that glorious but terrific event to latest ages, and give name

* Ps. lxxxv. 10. * Hab. iii. 16. || Ps. xlvi. 8, &c. † Exod. xiv. 13, 14.

to the sublime exercise of the blessed above, where the song of Moses and the Lamb shall be sung with unceasing triumph.

Thus salvation to the Church is connected in Scripture with the overthrow of her enemies,—predictions respecting the extension of Messiah's kingdom, and the increase of his willing subjects, with a solemn caution to the princes and rulers of the earth, and a dread menace, should they disregard it. Both are contrasted in a beautiful and striking manner in the seventy-second Psalm, which contains a grand prediction of the extent, duration, and prosperity of Messiah's gracious reign upon earth; and the Spirit of prophecy puts a proclamation in the mouth of Jesus, which connects the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God*; as if these, in different views, were one and the same, or always conjoined in the providence of God. When he is about to extend and establish the reign of truth, righteousness and salvation in the earth, the opposers of his cause, and lukewarm professed friends, have just cause to tremble. This is the only view in which a Christian can take comfort from the infliction of God's judgments upon the wicked and ungodly, who refuse to be reclaimed by them,—that tho' for the present not joyous but grievous, they will eventually advance the Divine glory, in the displays they give of the wisdom, and equity of God's moral government on earth, and in the farther spread of true and undefiled religion in the world. "Father in heaven, thy kingdom come!"

"The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought; he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever; the thoughts of his heart to all generations†." The wisdom of God's providence claims our reverence and admiration, no less than the power of his mighty arm. By this attribute of the Divine nature the counsels of states and empires, of kings and cabinets, are either directed to the accomplishment of the grand counsel of Heaven; or, should they attempt to thwart or oppose it, are over-ruled, blasted, and brought to nothing. Of this history can furnish innumerable proofs, to discover which should be the great end of perusing it. The wrath of man shall praise the Lord, and to the remainder thereof, what is not necessary for this purpose, will he set restraining bounds. Wherein haughty mortals may deal proudly, he will shew himself above them, and bring them into situations, in which even men of might shall not find their hands, or be able to deliver their own souls, and in which the wonted wisdom of the wise and prudent of

* Psal. ii. ¶ Isa. lvii. 1. † Psal. xxviii. 10, 11.

the world shall be turned into foolishness. Hence it is said, " Zion heard, and was glad, and the daughters of Judah rejoiced; because of thy judgments, O Lord;" and this joy is perfectly consistent with that solemn awe and dread of God, which these ought to inspire, yea, a blessed fruit of these pious dispositions. They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy—that tremble at the judgments of God, will find inward rest, peace and satisfaction in the day of trouble; when these judgments are abroad in the earth, and bear heavy on the workers of iniquity.

To conclude this part of the subject, Those that are exercised, like the Church in the text, under the frowns of Heaven, will take refuge under the covert of their Redeemer's blood and righteousness, as the only security from the penal effects of these judgments, and of the wrath to come, to which they are a certain prelude, if not improved aright. When the King over all the earth commands his professing people to prepare themselves to meet their God, whether in the dispensations of his word or providence, he by no means intends, that they should presume to approach him as an absolute, or uncovenanted God, or depend upon their own preparations for acceptance: for he is accessible only in Jesus the one Mediator, to the guilty penitent; without faith in whom he is to be dreaded as a consuming fire. To this mean of safety Moses had recourse in a crisis of imminent danger; " Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first born should touch them." The faithful under the Old Testament dispensation comforted themselves under all their afflictions by the promises of the future advent of Messiah, and the prospects which faith presented of the peace and prosperity of his reign. " This man, said they, shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land," shall be to us the author of peace and safety, when desolation spreads her dreary wings all over the country. The precious promises of protection in such situations, recorded in the ninety-first Psalm, meet in him, as the straight lines from the circumference of a circle meet in the centre, and are in time of need fulfilled to the heirs of promise for his sake; yea, fulfilled by himself in whom they are ratified and confirmed. He is the ark provided against every deluge of wrath—the chambers of safety into which they are exhorted to enter at the twentieth verse of this chapter where our text lies, to hide themselves till the indignation be overpast. He is that pavilion in which God himself hides them in evil days--the rock in

whose clift he covers them with the friendly hand of his protection, while he is passing by in terrible majesty, threshing the heathen in his anger, and distributing sorrows to his enemies in fury and in furious rebukes.

He is described by the evangelic prophet, who expatiates so much on his properties, “as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land;” figures all highly significant and expressive, considering the nature of the country and climate to which they allude. Hence they can say, “Thou art my hiding-place, thou shalt preserve me from trouble: thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.” He is that city of refuge, whose gates are ever open for the reception of guilty penitents, from whose sacred recesses they shall never be dragged; seeing he ever liveth to intercede for them. To him the prisoners of hope are exhorted to flee as their strong hold, where they shall be safe till the winter of time is past, and the rains and storms of adversity over and gone. In life, at death, and amidst the ruins of a perishing world, shall he prove a sun and shield to the righteous: for they shall be kept by his mighty power thro’ faith to salvation. Who or what can pluck them out of his, or his Father’s hand? To the exercise of waiting for him in the way of his judgments, he annexes a precious promise by his servant Malachi:—“Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” The prophet Ezekiel represents them as marked, by divine direction, for preservation in the hour of danger; which should encourage their confidence in God amidst all the reverses in their lot, and the commotions of the world.

Malachi gives us, towards the close of his prophecy, an account of the awful calamities that would overtake the wicked, when the day of God’s mercy and vengeance would come, and therewith contrasts the blessed security of the righteous: “For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be as stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with

† Isa. xxxii. 2.

‡ Psal. xxxii. 7.

|| Mal. iii. 16, 17.

healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet, in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts.*” While God is angry with the wicked every day, and hath prepared for them the instruments of death; the righteous are emboldened to confide in his care and goodness, even in the worst of times;—to commit all their concerns to his management and disposal, and approach him as children to a Father, who is both able and ready to help them. Of this privilege they avail themselves, and these troubles which drive the ungodly farther from him, and the paths of duty and happiness, and render their hearts more obdurate and callous; are the very mean of bringing them nearer to him as their redeeming and guardian God, and of promoting their conformity to his image, and meetness for his heavenly kingdom. They find him to be their refuge, their strength and very present help in trouble,—their shelter and hiding-place amidst the vicissitudes of life, their Shepherd and Sun in the gloomy vale of death—their shield from its fatal sting, and security from the triumphs of the grave—their Almighty guardian, crown of glory and diadem of beauty amidst the solemn concluding scenes of nature, when the hearts of millions shall melt thro’ fear,—when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the earth be convulsed to its centre, and the world, with the works that are therein be burnt up—and their everlasting and all-satisfying portion beyond the grave. There is not any thing present or future that can separate them from his love, or deprive them of his protecting care, for who or what can harm them while followers of that which is good, and of him who hath said, “ He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life†.” “ Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.”

Thus “ he that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty;” of whom he may say, “ He is my refuge, and my fortress: my God, in him will I trust.” “ The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day; nor the moon by nighty.” Such is the happy situation of the righteous, who may sing this song in the house of their pilgrimage, amidst the trials and sorrows of life; “ We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.” Who can dispute their right to the protection and privileges of this city, that hears its founder and Sovereign say, “ Open ye

* Mal. iv. 2, 3. † John viii. 12. § Psal. xcii. 1, 2.—cxi. 5, 6.

the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in?" Once within its walls, and no real evil shall befall them, no plague or danger come nigh their person, or their dwelling. "Thou wilt keep him, adds the prophet, in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee;" whence such are exhorted, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength†."

Having thus attempted to unfold the import of waiting for God, in the way of his judgments, at such length as the importance of the subject to all Christians may justify, and those who are so exercised will not regret,—this being indeed the great and leading point in the text, reserving a few practical reflections from what hath been suggested, to the close of another discourse, I conclude with a striking assertion of holy writ, in which we are presented with the different conditions and prospects of those who fear God, and wait for him in the way of his judgments; and of those who regard not his works, nor the operations of his hands. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit. And ye shall leave your name for a curse; for the Lord God shall slay thee." "It shall be even as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall all the nations be that fight against mount Zion." These things in respect of both the characters referred to in the above quotations, shall be realized in their season: for, adds the Psalmist, "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about*."

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† Isa. xxvi. 2, &c. * Isa. lxv. 13, &c.—xxix. 8.—Psal. xxxii. 10.

SERMON II.

ADVANTAGES OF WAITING FOR GOD IN THE WAY OF HIS JUDGMENTS.

ISAIAH XXVI. 8.

YE, IN THE WAY OF THY JUDGMENTS, O LORD, HAVE WE
WAITED FOR THEE.

AMIDST the various calamities to which human life is exposed, it affords matter of consolation to the truly pious to reflect, that infinite wisdom and goodness preside over the concerns of mankind. The Lord reigneth, saith the Psalmist, let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. He ruleth by his power, and wisely directs all events to his own glory, and the good of those who love and serve him. His throne was established of old for judgment, and his kingdom ruleth over all. One day shall all the ends of the world remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations†.

The oracles of truth, and the events of providence fully attest, That the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth—reigneth in Jacob even to the ends of the earth. Tho', to our limited apprehensions, clouds and darkness are round about him, and his judgments be a great deep: yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne, while his mercy is in the heavens, and extendeth over all his works. Under his wise, just and benign administration, it shall be well with the righteous--such as fear and serve him in truth and uprightness: but ill with the wicked,—with those who in heart and conduct disown his authority, refuse subjection to his Son, and honorary servant, violate or neglect his precepts and institutions, and so count themselves unworthy of eternal life. Those who neglect or decline the important duty in the text, from whatever cause,—waiting for God in the way of his judgments, when providence calls to it, must soon appear before him as their Judge, when they may

† Psal. xxvii. 1.

‡ Psal. xxii. 27, 28.

may expect judgment without mercy: while such as are so exercised may hope for protection amidst the evils of life, and an abundant entrance hereafter to his heavenly kingdom.

From this subject, you will recollect, it was proposed, thro' Divine aid,—To unfold the import of the exercise specified in the text—Point out some of the advantages resulting from it—Also direct your attention to some of these judgments, in the way of which we are called to wait for God, in the present eventful day—And then advert to some of these sins, which, there is reason to fear, may be the procuring cause of such judgments. The first thing proposed hath been already discussed, nor do I now recapitulate what was suggested, in illustration of that part of the subject, but proceed directly to point out some of the special advantages of waiting for God in the way of his judgments.

This exercise then, is expressive of true wisdom, and attended with discoveries of the divine favour and goodness. This is plainly intimated by the Psalmist, when he saith, “ Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord†.” The things to which he refers, are the remarkable events recorded, for our instruction, comfort and admonition, in the preceding parts of the psalm. These events were partly prosperous, and partly adverse—serving for correction and chastisement, and also to display the mercy and benignity of God, toward such as humble themselves under his mighty hand. The wisdom of the world suggests a thousand expedients to evade, or escape divine judgments, as preferable to that in the text; to which nothing but absolute necessity can reconcile. Did the old world wait for God, in the way of his threatened judgment of a deluge, when he gave them timely and repeated warning by Noah? who, believing God, prepared an ark, by his direction, to the saving of himself, and household. So far was this from being the case, they continued secure and unconcerned in their sins, and worldly pursuits, probably ridiculing Noah as a poor, deluded enthusiast, till the flood came and destroyed them all. Lot brought a solemn and interesting message to the ears of his sons-in-law, and urged compliance with it probably with tears; but you know the reception he found. “ And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law, which had married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city; but he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law†.” Too often, alas! are the admonitions and exhorta-

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† Psal. cvii. 43.

† Gen. xix. 14.

tions of the Word treated in the same manner. Similar was the conduct of Pharaoh, even under the judgments of the Lord, till these issued in his final, and awful destruction: and alas! how often since hath his infatuated example been copied? He thought he did wisely, in oppressing the Hebrews, while that very conduct paved the way for their deliverance, and for his own downfall, and the desolation of his kingdom. " And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come on, let us deal wisely with them*", &c. Modern slave dealers, and their partisans, may applaud the wisdom of their measures, for subjugating their fellow creatures, and detaining them in servitude; but a similar event will convince them of their folly, when, perhaps, for them too late. If Pharaoh and his servants had access to know how Moses and the children of Israel kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood; lest he that destroyed the first born should touch them, they would probably laugh at their conduct, till the event shewed its wisdom. The Spirit of God hath affixed a brand of infamy on those who are strangers to this exercise. " O Lord how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this!." He who is blind to the Lord's doings, understandeth not his designs in them, is ignorant of the final issue of things, and inattentive to his own eternal interest, he is, in the verdict of reason, and scripture, the brutish man, and the fool, who knoweth not the works of the Lord.

When God threatened ancient Israel by his prophets, and broke down the fence of their protection; instead of waiting on him in the way of threatened, or inflicted calamities, they formed alliances with heathen nations, learned their ways; yet often suffered more by their allies, than their enemies†. This their way was their folly; yet their posterity, and fellow-men approve it‡, and tread in similar steps. " O that my people had hearkened unto me, saith God, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries§." Attention to the voice of God, in his word and providence, is a much more effectual expedient to subdue an enemy, or repel his force, than to

* Exod. i. 9, 10. || Psal. xcii. 5, 6.

† " In his distresses Ahaz called in the assistance of Tiglath-Pileser King of Assyria; who invaded the kingdoms of Israel and Syria, and slew Retsin: but he was more in danger than ever from his too powerful ally; to purchase whose forbearance, as he had before bought his assistance, he was forced to strip himself and his people of all the wealth he could possibly raise, from his own treasury, from the Temple, and from the country." Dr. Lowth.

‡ Psal. xlix. 13.

§ Psal. lxxi. 13, 14.

subsidize princes, in whom we are exhorted to place no trust]; and while a people neglect to hear that voice, th' the greatest powers of earth should coalesce with them, they will prove, in the hour of need, but as a bowing wall, and a tottering fence, or a bruised reed, that will pierce those who lean upon it to the quick. The expressive aphorism of the wise Proverbial; "They that walk uprightly, walk surely," is verified in every age; yet blinded sinners still act, as if they had rather perish in their own way, than prosper in God's way. "Wisdom is justified of her children."

True wisdom consisteth in proposing the best ends, and fixing on the fittest means to attain and secure these ends. Such as wait for God, agreeable to the spirit of our text, discover this wisdom; because this is the best, indeed the only way, to obtain support under afflictions, real benefit from them, and complete deliverance in due time. The opposite course is not only foolish, but also fatal to those who pursue it. Solomon more than once tells us, "A prudent man forseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished." That the exercise in our text is attended with discoveries of the Lord's loving kindness, appears from the issue of the trials of a Joseph, a Job, a David, and others, but especially from the issue of our Saviour's sufferings, under which he waited patiently for the Lord. While so exercised, Christians receive testimonies of the divine love, brighter discoveries of their interest in it, and an increased meetnes for the full enjoyment of its precious fruits. "The Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, comforteth them in all their tribulations. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in them, so their consolation also abounding by Christ." To the truth of this, I trust, not a few present can bear witness, from their own experience. Have you not felt, my Brethren, the comforts of religion sweetest, when the world frowned most upon you, and when you were called and led, like the Church in this passage, to wait for your God in the way of his judgments?—Could you not thence say, It is good for us that we have been afflicted? Can you not still say, in reflecting even upon your greatest trials, The Lord hath done all things well;—he hath not afflicted us willingly, or merely to grieve us, but out of love, that we might become like him, and sharers of his joy; and he hath given us to understand so much? Persevere, for your pious labour, and exercise, in waiting for him, shall not be in vain in the Lord.

As the reasonable practice of the important duty in the text, is expressive of the truest wisdom, and usually accompanied with discoveries and intimations of the love and merciful intentions of God towards his people, even in public calamities; so, I may observe, it is also a happy mean of securing their safety and establishment in such situations. Both scripture and experience evince the truth of this observation. Of them that feared the Lord, thought upon his name, and spake often one to another, in a period of national defection, and public rebuke, he himself said, by his inspired servant, " And they shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels, or special treasure; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." God hath his different seasons of making up his jewels, as at their conversion, at death, and at the final appearance of the great God their Saviour; but it is probable, that he hath here more immediately in view the period of affliction and public distress, when his judgments are abroad in the earth. Whatever a man neglects amidst public hurry and confusion, he is sure, if possible, to take care of his jewels and special treasure. If obliged to flee from his habitation, or his country, these will he make up, as being both valuable and portable, and endeavour to secure. In what is said by the Psalmist of the wicked, who follow courses different from that in the text, we may see, as in a contrast, the security and prospects of his humble, waiting and obedient people. " Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operations of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up." Such inattention to Jehovah's works proceeds from disbelief of his word; as due attendance on him, and confidence in him in the way of his judgments, is the exercise and result of faith. So much was an eminently pious and great king convinced of this, that as he led forth his people against a numerous host of barbarous foes, the sacred historian tells us, " he flood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper*;" which they appear to have duly regarded. That to which he exhorted his people, he exemplified in his own carriage; and the issue rewarded his pious reliance on God; for his enemies received a complete defeat, while he and his people had little else to do, but to gather and divide the spoil. Happy for the world, did its princes copy the example of Jehoshaphat; for then less blood would be shed on the face of the earth, and a just cause would not fail to prosper.

The history of mankind shews that this is the certain road to prosperity and establishment; while the reverse is the direct path to disappointment and ruin. In the neglect of that, a king will not find his safety in the number or prowess of his troops, nor a state its prosperity in the extent of its population, commerce or wealth. "There is no king saved, saith the Psalmist, by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy: to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him: because we have trusted in his holy name*." These dictates of unerring truth are fraught with instruction to all; and with comfort to those who wait for God in the way of his testimonies. Disbelief of God's threatenings against sin, and the workers of iniquity, and inattention to his works, hath proved the fatal rock upon which myriads in every age have made shipwreck. Are there not with us, as a people, sins against which the artillery of Heaven is directly pointed in the word, and hath been often levelled in the course of providence, to the fatal experience of other nations? How can we expect ours should remain secure and tranquil, if this accursed evil, this Achan in the camp, is still retained and cherished? While this continues to be the case, our every prop of false confidence will deceive us in the issue, and leave us to be ashamed of our hope. How much more becoming to say, with the church of Israel; "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." If we do so aright, or wait for him in the way of his chastisements, we shall find occasion to add; "They are brought down, and fallen, but we are risen, and stand upright†." But should our trust rest on such things,—on our insular situation, our naval strength, the prowess of our troops, and the extent of our commerce; which, it is to be feared, is too much the case, have we no cause to apprehend, that we too shall be brought down, and left to fall from our boasted elevation in the scale of nations, into a state of degradation and distress?—"If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established‡," saith the Lord of hosts, whose word and purpose cannot be reversed.—

Safety in the season of trial and danger, or preservation from it, is the reward of keeping the word of God's patience, and waiting for him in the way of his judgments. To the

* Psal. xxxiii. 16, &c.

† Psal. xx. 7. 8.

‡ Isa. vii. 9.

angel or minister of the church in Philadelphia he saith, “ Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” “ In the time of trouble he shall hide them in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide them, he shall set them up upon a rock.” Suppose the most distressing scenes that ever existed—the noisome pestilence walking in darkness, destruction wasting at noon-day, a thousand falling at their side, and ten thousand at their right-hand; yet shall they not be afraid for the terror by night: nor for the arrow that flieth by day; there shall no evil beset them, neither shall any plague come nigh their dwelling, it shall not come nigh them, only with their eyes shall they behold, and see the reward of the wicked††. Such protection and deliverance from the most imminent dangers, hath Jehovah promised to his Anointed, and to his seed and followers, as you may see at large, by consulting the ninety-first Psalm. His perfections are the feathers with which he shall cover them;—his providence the wings under which they shall trust: his truth shall be their shield and buckler. The righteous have a strong city, furnished with every accommodations, whose walls and bulwarks are salvation, and its supplies inexhaustible and within itself. To them its gates are open night and day, and God himself invites them; “ Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For behold, the Lord cometh out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.” That the Lord is punishing the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, in the present commotions of the nations, is evident; that he is making inquisition for the blood of the slain, which the earth, so often drenched therewith, shall not always cover; and giving some blood to drink, having found them worthy, there can be no doubt. They that are not for him, are against him, that gather not with him, scatter abroad; and what the end of these things shall be, belongs to him to say and determine.

The Psalmist recommends, by his own example, what should be

§ Rev. iii. 10. || Psal. xxvii. 5.

†† In the dreadful visitation of London, by the plague in 1665, and of Marseilles in 1720, these promises were fulfilled to some who continued, at the risk of life, to discharge, amidst the general calamity, the duties of piety and humanity. A time-serving Clergy fled, ejected ministers stepped forth, to administer to their distressed and dying brethren every aid in their power.

† Isa. xxvi. 20, 21.

the exercise of Christians at such a time, and tells us that every godly person will be so employed. “ I acknowledged my sins unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding-place, thou shall preserve me from trouble: thou shall compass me about with songs of deliverance.” He will give his angels charge over such as are thus exercised; for are they not all, even Gabriel, not excepted, ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation? “ The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them;” which was literally accomplished in behalf of a venerable prophet of old. When the prophet’s servant saw in the morning the host of the king of Syria, who came by night, and compassed the city about, both with horses and chariots, he “ said unto him, Alas, my master, how shall we do! And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses, and chariots of fire, round about Elisha.” A poor prophet was here more honourably attended, and more safely protected, as the event shewed, than the king of Syria surrounded by his guards and nobles: yet such honour and protection have all the saints of the Most High.

The respective character, deportment, and prospects of the righteous and the wicked, are beautifully described, in a variety of particulars, by the royal prophet; a few of which permit me to recite. “ Evil doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. The Lord shall laugh at him; for he feeth that his day is coming. The upright shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs, they shall consume: into smoke shall they consume away. Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off thou shall see it. I have seen the wicked in great power; and spreading himself like a green bay-

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† Psal. xxxii. 5, 6, 7.

‡ Psal. xxxiv. 7.

|| 2 Kings vi. 15, 16, 17.

tree. Yet he passed away, and lo he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together, the end of the wicked shall be cut off†. Above, the wicked, even those of them who possessed great power, are compared to a green tree, which, tho' left to itself, will in time wither and perish, but is more frequently cut down while yet fresh and verdant. Under this very image, the powerful and haughty monarch of Babylon, saw, portrayed in vision, his own exalted state, and subsequent degradation‡; conveying to the mind a most striking and affecting idea of the calamities and deaths of princes; the rise and tragical fate of states and empires; swept with the besom of destruction; the overthrow of cities, whose dimensions, towers, and palaces once astonished the earth, but whose site cannot now be traced; and the desolations of the chosen and once famous city Jerusalem. The glory of this world passeth away, like the fading verdure of a tree, or the more transient beauties of the flowers of the field.—

Another advantage of the pious and prudent exercise in the text is, Peace, joy and composure of mind, both under, and upon reviewing outward troubles and calamities. This, with the truly pious, is not the result of a stoical insensibility under their own immediate sufferings; or from the want of commiseration for the sufferings of others; but the fruit of the divine goodness, and of the principles and views by which they are actuated. Viewing God as a wise, powerful, and gracious Father, and confiding in him as such, they experience the accomplishment of that promise; “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee*”: while the wicked are fretted, and irritated by the adverse events in their lot, like the troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters throw up mire and filth. They devolve their cares upon God, have their eye on the final issue of things, and firmly believe that he will order all things for the best, even these which for the present are not joyous but grievous. What influence can all the arguments and succours of vain philosophy have on the human mind, in the season of trial and adversity, compared to those of true and undefiled religion? The former may make a fine appearance in theory, and promise great things; but fail, like winter brooks, in the time of greatest need. Hence, some of the greatest devotees of reason and human wisdom, have sought shelter, under the pressure of affliction, and in the gloomy vale of death, beneath the venerable shade of religion; whose

† Psal. xxxvii.

‡ Dan. iv. 10, 11, &c.

* Isa. xxvi. 3.

rays, like those of the natural sun, brighten the dark clouds of adversity. The upright enjoy peace within, while the world frowns, and the surges of affliction swell; and their latter end is also peace, quietness, and assurance for ever. At peace with God, and themselves, the most gloomy objects assume a serene, and pleasing aspect.

The Church of the faithful alone can triumph in tribulation, and rise superior both to the frowns and smiles of a present world. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, tho' the earth be removed, and tho' the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Tho' the waters thereof roar, and be troubled, tho' the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God: the holy place of the tabernacle of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." Amidst the violent concussions of the kingdoms of the earth, the kingdom of Messiah, and all its loyal subjects, shall be safe; and when the former shall sink and perish, never more to rise, the latter shall shine forth in all the splendor of their heavenly extraction, and future elevated destination. Why should those be greatly dismayed at the shaking of these things which shall all wax old like a garment, and be changed as a vesture||, who have a sure interest in that which cannot be shaken, but remaineth uncorruptible, undefiled, never-fading and immutable? Of them it is descriptive to look, not at the things which are seen, and are temporal; but at the things which are not seen and are eternal; and therefore, while these are secured to them beyond all possibility of disappointment, why should they lose their confidence, or be cast down at the vicissitudes of this mortal state? How full to this purpose the declaration of an ancient prophet? "Altho' the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation||." Dives the men of the world of these things, and they are ready to exclaim, with the Ephraimite of old; "Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more*?" The prophet tells us however, how he came by this happy frame of mind,—it was the fruit of waiting for God in the way of his judgments: "When I heard, &c. I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble." He was far from

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‡ Psal. xlvi. 1, &c. || Psal. cii. 26. § 1Cor. iv. 18.
 ¶ Hab. iii. 17, 18. * Judges xviii. 24.

being one of those of whom it is said, " Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." for it was a deeply affecting sense of the majesty of God, in the judgments which he threatened to execute, that produced such effects upon his mind, and prepared him for reaping consolation in the day of trial. " Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." " They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." for " weeping may endure for a night"—the night of affliction, which may be sometimes very dark and long, " but joy cometh in the morning." The very exercise of waiting for God, in such situations, affords a joyful evidence of an interest in him, and in the promises of his word, while it cherishes and promotes these pious dispositions of patience, submission to the divine will, and the like.

That God's people may, and often do possess peace, joy and serenity of soul, amidst outward dangers and disasters, as also when delivered from these, appears evident from what is recorded in Scripture of their experience in such situations, did time permit us to particularize this. What were Joseph's sentiments, while his God deigned to converse with him in his prison, to raise him to honour in the state, and bless him with many happy interviews with his aged father, who had so long given him up for lost? David in a wilderness enjoyed as sweet communion with his God, as afterwards upon the throne; nor was Daniel forsaken in the den, nor Jeremiah in the dungeon. The three Hebrew worthies waited for God in the way of a very fiery trial; and yet how serene and dignified was their deportment, and glorious its issue! " If it be so, our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hands, O king." Would not John, our Lord's harbinger, sleep more soundly in his dungeon, than Herod upon his throne? Paul and Silas sang in prison, while their feet were made fast in the stocks: and Peter was found fast asleep between his two keepers, when the angel came to knock off his fetters, set open his prison door, and conduct him to a place of safety. Tho' he knew not but the following day might bring him to the scaffold or the stake; yet he seemed very little concerned about the issue, enjoying the approbation of his God, and the testimony of his own conscience. Who would not prefer the situation of the beloved John in the desolate isle of Patmos, when favoured with the visions of the Almighty, to that of his cruel persecu-

tor Domitian, tho' the world paid homage at his feet, and filled his treasures with their tribute? Our blessed Lord, the illustrious prince of sufferers, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame. Like Lazarus, they all received their evil things, and waited for God in the way of his judgments, before they lifted up the head in triumph; yet were never left, during the conflict, to sorrow as without hope. They all rejoiced in God, and in hope of the glory to be revealed in his saints; found these and the like exhortations no absurd paradox, or vain requisition, "Rejoice evermore;" "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations," or trials, as the word imports.

They have cause for this, not only on their own account, but chiefly, because the glory of God shall be promoted by such events, while the displays of his being and perfections in them, prove the mean of convincing and reclaiming some, of rendering impenitent sinners more inexcusable, and of doing real service to the Church at large. Hence we find this exercise enjoined, "Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments." As the church, and all her children are here exhorted to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, on account of the displays of divine power and justice, on her behalf, against her enemies; so at the overthrow of mystic Babylon the exhortation is repeated. "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her." We are elsewhere expressly told that they actually rejoiced on this very account; and the above command or exhortation made this not only lawful, but a duty. "Zion heard and was glad, and the daughters of Judah rejoiced; because of thy judgments, O Lord*." That judgments here do not intend the divine laws and statutes, in which sense the term often occurs in scripture, appears pretty evident from the connexion of both passages. The first is introduced by these words, "According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness," or justice, displayed in avenging the wrongs of the oppressed, and punishing the workers of iniquity. In the other, it is preceded and followed by these remarkable sentences. "Confounded be all they that serve graven images; that boast themselves of idols. For thou, Lord, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods." The first clause should be rendered in the future, like many others of an imprecatory nature, and would then run; "All they that serve graven images shall

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† Psal. cxxvi. 5, 6.—xxx. 5. ‡ Dan. iii. 17

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be confounded, that boast themselves of idols." "Zion heard this, and was glad, and the daughters of Jerusalem rejoiced; because of the Lord's judgments; that is, threatened in this passage, or executed agreeably to the threatening, in the course of holy providence. Both Heathen and Christian idolaters are doubtless intended by those "that serve graven images;" and it is expressly threatened that both shall be confounded. This hath been often fulfilled, in the experience of Jews and Gentiles, under the Old Testament dispensation; and even some pious princes were severely chastised for forming leagues, and combining in war with idolaters. That modern combinations with the worshippers of graven images would turn out to the mutual confusion of those that enter into them, might have been easily foreseen by those who make the word of God the rule of their judgment: for he hath expressly said, "All they that serve graven images shall be confounded;" to whom may be added, all those who combine with them, and abet their cause. At the declaration, or execution of this threatening, the true Church rejoiced; and why should she not; because the success of their counsels and efforts infers the injury or overthrow of Messiah's kingdom, as their defeat or confusion insures its advancement.

We are taught by our Divine Saviour to pray—" Our Father in heaven thy kingdom come—thy will be done on earth;" but to pray for success to the counsels and exertions of the votaries of idols, in so far as these may be calculated to support their cause and system, is, in effect, to reverse the above petitions; or to pray that the kingdom of darkness, superstition, and idolatry,—the kingdom of Antichrist, may be established in the earth. When the Church expressed her joy at the judgments of the Lord against such, she added; "Thou, Lord, art high above all the earth; thou art exalted far above all gods;" and, consequently, wherein they deal proudly, he is above them. There be lords many, and gods many, who shall yet die like men, and fall like one of the princes†. Rulers and magistrates are styled gods, to point out the nature and design of their office; but if they honour and serve him not in that station, he will shew himself to be far above them, pour contempt upon them, and appear more terrible to them‡ than they can to the meanest of their vassals His Holiness at Rome hath often been styled god, and arrogated to himself both the titles and honours of Diety, " opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God||;" yet the great Lord of all the earth is far above him, and will

† Psal. lxxxii. 7. ‡ Job. xiii. 21.—Psal. cvii. 40. || 2 Thes. v. 4.

shew that, instead of being God, he is the son of perdition—that wicked or ungodly one, whom the Lord will destroy by the breath of his mouth, and abolish by the brightness of his coming. The Spirit of God subjoins, “Ye that love the Lord, hate evil; he preserveth the souls of his saints, he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked;” hate every sin, but more especially the evil of idolatry, that great transgression, which, from the connexion, seems more immediately intended. Have no fellowship with such unfruitful works of darkness, as you would hope the Lord will preserve your souls, and deliver you out of the hand of the wicked. I conclude this particular by observing, that the passage upon which I have thus a little commented in your hearing, is at present visibly accomplishing among the nations; and how far we are concerned in its accomplishment, I leave Heaven, our own conscience, and time, that great expositor of scripture predictions, to determine.—

I would moreover, observe, That the conduct imported in our text bears honourable testimony to the truth and power of true religion, and sets an example both worthy of, and calculated to excite imitation. When persons who possess nothing extraordinary, in point of natural powers, or acquired talents, and these, even of the weaker sex, and the most timid natural dispositions, not a few, discover, in the most arduous and trying situations, such patience, self-denial, fortitude, elevation of sentiment, and the like, as would have done honour to the greatest and most learned philosopher that ever existed; does not this recommend these principles and views by which they are actuated, animated and supported? When all this is exemplified in the earlier periods of life, while placed on the pinnacle of rank and wealth, and the world presents its most flattering prospects, must we not own that this religion is from above, which can induce even then to make such sacrifices? In vain would they have recourse to the succours of reason, and the boasted aids of philosophy, tho' these should be placed in their full extent to view; for in the dark valley of affliction and death, they prove a spring shut up, a fountain sealed,—miserable comforters, and physicians of no value. How often have their greatest votaries found them to be such; and yet their admiring sons implicitly tread in the same steps! In vain do we expect to gather figs of thorns, and grapes of thistles. The great and noble cloud of witnesses, of whom we read in the eleventh to the Hebrews, and wherewith we are encompassed, possessed, and discovered a very different spirit, while they confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and declared plainly that they sought a better country. The Apostle, in his summary of their achievements, tells us, That “thro’ faith

they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trials of cruel mockings, and scourgings; yea moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented: of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." While these worthy characters, by the grievous and diversified sufferings which they endured, and the exemplary mode of their enduring them, brought glory to God, honour to their religious profession; and an honourable testimony to religion itself; they have also set all succeeding ages a pattern, highly worthy of imitation; and, no doubt, myriads have been induced, not only to admire, but copy the example.

As a Christian is called to wait for his God, in the way of his judgments, so also in the way of his messenger death, to which these may be a prelude. The avenue of death is usually skirted by a dark valley, where beasts of prey not seldom exert their power. Pain and sickness are its wonted harbingers, which have a call to wait for God. The wise virgins, when the midnight cry announced in their ears the near approach of the Bridegroom, went out to meet him with trimmed lamps; and Job saith, " All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come"—wait tho' these days should be full of trouble. " I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living;" which knowledge had a practical influence on his heart and life. Death is an interesting event, appointed for all; and thro' fears of which many have been subject to bondage. Many sins and frailties may, like the shadow, appear little in the meridian of life, and sit easy on the mind, amidst health and outward prosperity; yet seem to increase and magnify with our setting sun. Against the fears thence arising, faith in Jesus is the only effectual antidote; for there is no condemnation to them who are in him, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit†. This divine principle inspires the soul, in the immediate view of that solemn event, and its succeeding scenes, with that song of triumph; " O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy

victory?" "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." The religion of Jesus, and that alone, properly understood and duly embraced, can divest death of his fatal sting, and the grave of her dreaded victory: for he hath proved the plague of death, and the destruction of the grave†, by his sufferings, and death, and by his temporary descent into the land of sculls. Hence the apostle adds, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord." His gracious presence with a Christian, is sufficient to support and comfort in the season of adversity, to fortify the mind against the fears of death and futurity, and to make him more than a conqueror over every enemy thro' his love; and this presence is to be sought and expected, by waiting for God in the way of his judgments. —

I would once more here observe, That this exercise is calculated to promote holiness of heart and life, and the reformation of some of the worst of characters; none of the least of these advantages of which it is productive. Every well regulated government will propose, in punishing crimes, only the reformation, not the destruction of those who offend; and to deter others, for the good of society. To prevent the commission of crimes, is a matter of much greater consequence than to punish them, and therefore, claims the first and chief attention of every legislature; inasmuch as it is more praise worthy, and more like the great source of being, and of all authority, to save life than to destroy it. That such are not the great ends of punishment under the administration of the Almighty, at least in the present state, we have no cause to suspect. When divine chastisements produce the desired effects, either on individuals or communities, their end is answered, and they never issue in the ruin of either, as appears from the case of penitent Nineveh. It is only when transgressors continue obstinate and impenitent under the divine forbearance, and the means employed to effect their reformation, as did Pharaoh, Saul and others, that these prove the harbingers of their destruction. God may, indeed, and often does, bear with some longer than with others; yet his ways are equal in respect of all, and will at length approve their equity to every man's conscience. As he intends the improvement of his people, by their correction, and indeed, by these events of his providence, in which they are not the immediate sufferers; and as his grace, imparted to them, inclines and leads to that improvement, so his design will not, cannot be frustrated. When a parent takes up the rod of

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correction, does he not wish, that his child may be thence induced to respect his authority, to give obedience to his commands, and confess his faults with sorrow? and does he not propose these salutary effects by applying it?

The judgments of the Lord sometimes in Scripture denote his laws and statutes, which some suppose is the sense in the text; as if the church had said, Truly, O Lord, we have patiently waited thy time, and humbly acquiesced in thy mode of deliverance, under all our troubles, in the diligent observance of all thy precepts and institutions. This sentiment the Psalmist expresses, "O Lord, teach me thy judgments. My soul is continually in my hand," intimating the imminent dangers to which he was so often exposed, and the sense which he had of them; "yet do I not forget thy law." Tho' there is reason, from the connexion, to suppose, that the term here, as also often elsewhere, is meant to intend afflictions and calamities, in which view it is taken all along in the illustration of the subject; yet the other sense must not be excluded: for it is a certain truth, that the faithful wait for God in the path of duty, studying, like Zacharias and Elizabeth of old, to walk in all his commandments and ordinances blameless, even when he is a God that hideth himself, or taketh vengeance on their inventions. When the voice of God is in the city, in their family or nation, the men of wisdom will lay it to heart, regard and consider his works, and the operations of his hands; submitting to the evil of affliction in their own case, and regarding it in that of others, as sent by him for correction and instruction in righteousness: for "the rod and reproof give wisdom." The troubles and trials of the present state, tend to wean their affections from the world, and to prompt them to greater diligence and activity in the service of their God and Saviour. They also work patience, experience and hope in those who are suitably exercised by them. To such the fruit of trouble is the purging away of sin, and in the furnace they lose naught but the dross. There is often a need be, that they should be "in heaviness thro' manifold temptations, or trials: that the trial of their faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, tho' it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

The operation of God's judgments is twofold. While they purify and perfect his Church, as gold is purified and refined by the furnace; they consume his and her enemies like fire. The prophet makes them conducive to the redemption of the Church: "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her

[†] Psal. cxix. 108, 109. [‡] Pet. i. 6, 7.

converts with righteousness;” or justice. This was verified not only in the sufferings of her compassionate Saviour, the procuring, or meritorious cause of her redemption; but also in the punishment of her enemies, and in the chastisement of her own children. With what judgments was she redeemed from Egyptian servitude, from the threatening danger in Mordecai’s days—from the malice and persecution both of Jews and Heathens, and from the tyranny of Popery at the reformation, and other occasions! And she will be still redeemed with judgments, when God shall destroy the man of sin with the breath of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming, and overturn every thing in the systems of men that opposeth the extension of Messiah’s reign. The judgments of Heaven shall be farther manifested, when he cometh as a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap; “but who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?” The promise of redeeming Zion with judgment, is preceded with a complaint of the conduct of their princes, and a threatening to cut off those that were in opposition to his cause and people. “Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.” As a consequence of this, it is added in respect of Zion, or Jerusalem, “And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin. And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.” The appearances of Jehovah, whether in behalf of his people and against their enemies, or for the chastisement and correction of the Church, have been the mean of diffusing some knowledge of God among the nations, and of reaching a conviction of his superiority over all their gods. Even kings were thus brought, as in the case of Daniel, the three Hebrew worthies, and others, to acknowledge the true God, and pass edicts in favour of his people. The grandeur and degradation of Nebuchadnezzar, as foretold by Daniel, in the interpretation of his dreams,—the destruction of his grand-son Belshazzar, and the termination of the empire of the Chaldeans in him, according to the prophet’s interpretation of the hand writing that appeared upon the plaster of the wall, amidst his impious feast; and the restoration of the Jews to their own country, after

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feventy years captivity, are events, which brought glory to the God of Israel, while they also tended to inspire becoming sentiments towards him. "That Cyrus should issue a decree for the Jews to return to their own land, and to rebuild their city and temple; that he should dismiss such a number of captives, not only without money and without price, but should send them home laden with presents; this was the work of Jehovah, who only could thus turn the captivity of Zion." Those who waited for God in the way of his judgments, while these tended to promote his glory and their best interest, would have great cause to rejoice in the issue.

The example of the true Israel, in waiting for God in the way of his judgments, or afflictive dispensations, is calculated to benefit others, and to co-operate with these in exciting to a similar conduct. It hath been often remarked, That the blood of the martyrs hath proved the seed of the Church; as their example under all their sufferings was very much adapted to conquer the prejudices that were unhappily entertained against the cause in which they were embarked. The persuasive eloquence of a Christian conversation, in circumstances so trying and perilous, often reached conviction to the heart of those who had long remained deaf and blind to all the dictates of reason and religion, and all the alluring charms of heavenly wisdom. By means of the light of such a conversation, made to shine before men, many have been brought to glorify their Heavenly Father, and to acknowledge that he was with them of a truth, while they felt their influence as the salt of the earth, and the lights of the world. These judgments, whether threatened in the word of truth, if the threatenings are believed, or inflicted in the course of providence, have a native tendency, thro' the divine blessing, to bring over wicked men, in the dispensations of them, to wait for the Lord. Of this the inhabitants of Nineveh, who repented at the preaching of Jonah, are a standing proof. While the prophet denounced the destruction of their city within forty days, as a just punishment of their heinous transgressions, we are told that they believed God, proclaimed a fast, added earnest and fervent supplications to deep abasement, without exception of rank or title, and that to all this they joined reformation of conduct,—turned, as they were exhorted, from their evil way, and from the violence that was in their hands. Manasseh, when forced to flee from his capital, and was caught in the thorns, a just emblem of adversity, by his pursuing foes and carried in chains to Babylon, there humbled himself greatly before the Lord God of his fathers: whence he was exalted in due time to his former abused dignity and power, with very different views and senti-

ments. Even Ahab, who sold himself to commit iniquity, when the inspired Messenger of Heaven threatened him with certain judgments, clothed himself with the usual habit of a penitent, and went softly. The trials of Joseph's brethren brought conscience, for a time asleep, to perform its office; " And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us; and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us." The Psalmist tells us, respecting the afflicted Jews, " When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned, and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer." The prophet, in the context, also saith—" Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them."

" When thy judgments are in the earth," saith our prophet, " the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." It being the great design of our heavenly Father, in sending these abroad on the earth, to bring men to a sense of their guilt, their danger, and their duty, and thence to seek and serve him as their Lord and portion, there is reason to hope that, not only his own people, but even the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. While these judgments are laying waste, and spreading terror in the earth, mistakes respecting the Divine government are rectified, the lives of some reformed, and they brought to acknowledge the justice of God in their punishment, and to repent of their own conduct in offending him; and thus are reclaimed to the paths of truth and rectitude, which they find to be ways of pleasantness and peace. Such is the design and happy tendency of this salutary but severe discipline; and tho' alas! many will still continue obstinate and unreformed under it, yea, perhaps become more obdurate and impenitent, revolting more and more; yet some, previously strangers to God and true religion, will profit, and thence be brought both to the knowledge and practice of their duty. As it is the great object of affliction to teach righteousness, blessed is the man, or the nation whom God chastens, and thus teaches, that he may give them rest from days of sad adversity, till the pit is digged for the incorrigibly wicked. And strangely stupid must those fools be, who will not forsake, or give up their folly, tho' brayed as with a pestle in such a mortar.

The memorable destruction of the old world by water, of the wicked cities of the plain by fire from heaven; the plagues inflicted in Egypt, the overthrow of the Egyptians in the red

sea, and the deliverance of the Israelites; what happened in the wilderness, and in the land of Canaan; the calamities of the Jews, with the destruction of their city and temple—their civil and religious polity, by the Roman armies, as predicted by our Lord; with the various chastisements they previously endured; in fine, the judgments inflicted upon mankind in every age, are adapted, as they were indeed intended, to impress the minds of men with a conviction of the being of a great first cause, of his hatred of iniquity, and the wisdom and justice of his moral administration. Such effects they actually produced on the minds of very heathens; among whom they became subjects of frequent observation. Some of the events mentioned above paved the way for the spread of Christianity among the nations, when it came to be promulgated by the apostles.

Jonah's punishment, and the dreadful tempest that made it necessary, excited an awe of the true God—the God of Israel, in the minds of the mariners that sailed with him; as appears from the history of that event. If the account of this, and the miraculous mode of his preservation and deliverance, reached Nineveh, it might have had a powerful effect in predisposing the inhabitants to give his awful message a favourable reception. Bad as the world is, it would be doubtless, much worse, were it not for the judgments wherewith individuals and communities have been visited, in the course of divine providence; which manifests both wisdom and goodness, as well as justice in those dispensations. They must be far gone indeed, if not beyond recovery, who remain unreclaimed from their evil ways, amidst the light of divine truth, and under the corrections of Jehovah's rod. Both the one and the other produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness in those that properly understand, and are duly exercised by them. When a person, or a people continue secure, impenitent, or rebellious, in such situations, inattentive to the signs of the times, and wedded to their lusts and evil courses, there is no small reason to fear that they are given up of God, and that he means to make them awful examples of his justice and severity. He never leaves a people to remain so infatuated, till he is provoked by their conduct to determine their destruction.

While an unbelieving world acts a part so unreasonable in itself, and so fatal in its consequences, real Christians will wait for God in the way of his judgments, and regard these as a prelude to, and certain earnest and pledge of that future solemn judgment, where the sons of men shall receive, without respect of persons, according to the deeds done in the body, whether good or bad. They wait for him, in the prospect of

the latter, as well as in the way of the former; whence an apostle represents them as expecting that solemn event: "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin," or a sin offering, "unto salvation." "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and," or even, "our Saviour Jesus Christ."†

Thus have I pointed out some of the advantages which proceed from the exercise specified in the text, in doing which, some of the important ends, served by the divine judgments, have been likewise occasionally noticed. I would conclude this discourse with only tendering a few thoughts to you that now hear me, respecting your concern in these trials and afflictions wherewith God may be pleased to visit and exercise us as individuals; reserving a more general improvement of the subject, till our attention hath been directed to the judgments, in the way of which we are called, as professing Christians, to wait for God in the present gloomy and eventful day.

"Man, says Job, is of few days, and full of trouble;" and the followers of our Lord are warned by himself and his apostles, "In the world ye shall have tribulation"—"and that we must thro' much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Afflictions are no less the wages, the just punishment of sin, than death; and call upon us to receive them as such, and improve them to the purposes for which they are sent. Few, if any present, but have had their share in these, either in their own person, or those of their relatives and connections. Permit me then to ask, Have you received and improved these dispensations aright? While thus visited, have we been exercised, like the Church, waiting for the Lord in the way of his judgments; having the desire of our soul to his name, and to the remembrance of him; and with our soul desiring him in the night, and with our spirit within us seeking him early?—Hath affliction excited a serious concern to learn the procuring cause?—Have we received it as a fatherly correction, kindly intended for our benefit and improvement?—Have we been led, under trouble and distress, to attend to the Lord's chastening hand, acknowledging his interposition, the justice and wisdom of his procedure, and waiting for deliverance in his own time and way?—Has it been our fixed concern, and earnest endeavour, to be found suitably exercised under the Lord's hand,—and taking refuge under the covert of our Redeemer's blood and righteousness, as the only security from the penal effects of present troubles, and from the wrath to come, to which they lead, if not duly improved? These things were considered as import-

ed in the exercise of the Church in the text, and if they have made no part of ours, under the afflicting hand of Heaven, we must be strangers to the benefits and advantages that result from such exercise. We discover no true wisdom under our afflictions, nor can enjoy tokens of the divine love and favour. Can these trials work together for our good, promote our holiness and happiness, and be attended with peace and joy in believing, while we decline a duty so important and reasonable in itself, and so beneficial in its fruits and consequences?

While such is the conduct of many, that they may be said to despise the chastening of the Lord, there are still some,—O that there were many! possessed of wisdom to hear his voice, and discern his hand when lifted up in just and salutary chastisements. Such would I exhort to bless God for that grace which hath enabled them to wait for him in situations, wherein others have been left to act a very different part. Forget not, Brethren, who and what hath made your conduct so materially to differ, and that you have nothing but what you have received, and can do nothing truly good, but as you are assisted from above. Give God the glory, while you reap the precious fruits. Bless your divine Lord and Saviour, who hath purchased all necessary grace for you, lives in heaven to bestow it, and there pleads you may be kept from the evils that are in the world, and sanctified by the word of truth, and the rod of correction; while his guiding eye is upon you, and his mighty arm is ever ready to be stretched out for your support, protection, and deliverance. Forget not also to adore and bless the Holy Spirit of all grace, who as your Comforter in all your tribulations, causeth your consolations to abound by Christ; and as your Advocate and Sanctifier, enables you to make your case and requests known to God, and to derive real improvement from affliction. In every situation, be steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, in as much as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, who will prove your refuge, strength, and very present help in trouble.

As you must lay your account with meeting new trials, from different quarters, while you inhabit mortal bodies, and reside in this vale of tears, be intreated still to trust in the Lord, and in the word of his grace. If at present exercised with any, take the course of the Church—wait for God while so visited—expect deliverance from him alone, wholly resigned in respect to the time and manner of granting it. Seek present peace and comfort, and needful relief in due time, with glory, honour and immortality hereafter, only for Messiah's sake, and by a patient continuance in well-doing. Thus shall you be hid in the day of evil, when many sorrows shall be to the wicked,

and soon brought to that state, where neither sin nor sorrow, pain, nor death shall be once felt or dreaded. Those who die in the Lord, are blessed with immediate rest from their labours, and an abundant entrance into their Master's kingdom and joys. In his blissful mansions there is light without darkness, perfection in holiness without any remains of infirmity, happiness without the least mixture of misery; and life never embittered by sorrow, disappointment or disease, nor closed by death. God himself is their everlasting light, their crown of glory, and diadem of beauty; and the days of his people's mourning shall be ended. In our Father's house and kingdom, peace, love, and tranquility have their perpetual residence; for around his throne is a rainbow, in sight like an emerald, as the emblem and pledge of these blessings; so unlike the thrones of earth, so often stained with the blood of subjects as well as foes. Let the prospect of such felicity, secured beyond the reach of accident or enemies, and unimpaired by lapse of time, support under present trials, and reconcile the mind to them. Persevere in waiting on and for God in the duties of piety and devotion,—public, private, and secret; in obedience to his precepts, and due regard to the events of his providence; waiting for him in the course even of those that are for the present not joyous but grievous. Thus may you hope for the accomplishment of these, and the like precious promises, for the sake of your great Lord and surety, in and by whom they are ratified and confirmed. “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.”

With regard to those who are yet strangers to the exercise specified in the text,—who have never waited on God aright in the means of grace, nor for him in the afflictive events of his providence, what ground of comfort and security can such have, under personal affliction, or amidst outward calamities? Happy, could we indulge the pleasing hope, that there are none such now present, that we all wait for God, like the prophet, and the faithful in his day. It is to be feared however, that the matter is far otherwise with many of us.—Bear with me, my friends and fellow men, while I tender you a few admonitions, which I pray Heaven may not be in vain in the Lord. No present enjoyment can secure from trouble or death; and these, without the gracious presence of God, will prove like the pillar of

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cloud to the Egyptians, thro' which God looked upon them, while passing thro' the red sea, and greatly troubled their host. With your present temper, I speak to you who are not yet renewed by divine grace, you are unfit to relish the pleasures of true religion, either in health or sickness, or to improve either aright. How can you be prepared to meet God, in the adverse events of his providence—in the dark valley, not of the shadow, but of the substance of death, to you a king of terrors, and at his enlightened and solemn tribunal; while you, refuse now to meet with him as a reconciled God and Father in Christ Jesus, and neglect to wait for him in the way of present chastisements?

You are in a most perilous situation, nought betwixt you and these solemn events but the breath in your nostrils—that slender thread which may be cut asunder in a moment, should divine patience once cease to spare, and stern justice receive a charge to cut you down as cumberers of the ground. You may now decline the pious exercise in our text, and undervalue the precious advantages of which it is productive; but can you ward off the stroke of death, fit the summons to appear in judgment, or appeal from, or ward off the execution of the final sentence? There your talents and conduct shall be weighed in an equal balance, and you will doubtless reap as you now sow. Unless you take shelter under the covert of Messiah's blood and righteousness,—and are found in him, the great antitype of Noah's ark, his second appearance will confound you, and the deluge of wrath and fiery indignation, to be then poured from the full vials of his wrath, shall overwhelm you. Can you bear the thought of being adjudged, by the compassionate Jesus, become the lion of the tribe of Judah to you, to all the horrors of the second death—to Tophet ordained of old as a place of torment for the king, the prince of darkness and his combined legions?—Then shall those who now pierce him, by rejecting his grace, resisting his authority, and neglecting, or abusing his institutions, under profession of love and subjection to him, weep and wail because of him.

Is it a light matter to bear the gnawings of the worm that shall never die, and the torture of the fire which shall not be quenched;—the remorse of a guilty conscience, aggravated by keen despair, and the operation of divine wrath, fierce and penetrating as fire, to co-operate with that remorse? Who can describe the nature and extent of the second death? How doleful their dungeon, where divine mercy is quite gone, and the God of grace and peace shall cease to be favourable—where the anchor of hope is broken, and reflection on the past, and the anticipation of the future, will be equally intolerable? Such, however, are the present prospects of those, who now refuse,

when called by the word and providence of God, to wait for him, in the way of his judgments. Dying in their present state, they shall undergo an eternal judgment; be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, with his mighty angels, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel.

These things duly considered, and firmly believed, how cordially welcome would such messages from Heaven prove! "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.—Hearken to me, ye stout hearted, that are far from righteousness: behold, I bring my righteousness near to you, and my salvation shall not tarry—If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink—Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money, for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David—Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Never did the dew of Heaven, in time of drought, prove more refreshing and beneficial to the parched fields, than these and the like friendly counsels of our compassionate Lord, would prove to a broken and contrite heart. Were sin seen and felt in its guilt, power and malignity, would such good tiding be announced in our ears in vain? Did the refreshing influences of divine grace descend, in soft silence from above, to accompany the administration of the word of truth, commanding the blessing, even life for evermore, how delightful and profitable would our attendance upon God in his sanctuary prove! I would only add, let such of you as fear the Lord, acknowledge him in all your ways, and wait on and for him in his ways, and you will find them to be pleasantness and peace. May he grant us all, for this important purpose, grace and understanding in all things!

SERMON III.

JUDGMENTS IN THE WAY OF WHICH, WE ARE CALLED TO WAIT FOR GOD.

ISAIAH XXVI. 8.

YEA, IN THE WAY OF THY JUDGMENTS, O LORD, HAVE WE
WAITED FOR THEE.

THE Judgments of Heaven, like the pillar of cloud and fire of old, have a bright and a dark side—present light and comfort, from amidst the horrid gloom, to the faith of the true Israel; but darkness and terror to every Egyptian,—every man of the world, who is fighting against God, in his word and providence, and attempting to suppress his cause and people in the world. It is kind and merciful in the supreme Ruler, and universal Parent, to correct his straying offspring and subjects, in order to reclaim them; and disconcert such schemes as they may adopt or pursue, without due regard to his glory, should they at any time act so far out of character. Success in measures disapproved of Heaven is, in effect, the very worst of judgments: for the prosperity of fools, or inconsiderate, obstinate sinners, destroys them. This tends to foster pride and self-confidence, and so forebodes, and indeed paves the way to ruin: for as before honour, is humility; so pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

The primary end, and benign tendency of the adverse events of Providence is, to teach righteousness, and reclaim sinners from the evil and error of their ways, that their ruin may be happily prevented. But should they provoke God, by despising his chastening, and refusing to be corrected, to abandon them to their own heart's lusts, and leave them to succeed in ways of their own devising; must they not walk on blindly in their own counsels, whence it is easy to foresee the consequence. Hence it hath passed into a proverb, Whom God means to destroy, he infatuates. Those that have him on their side, need not mind who oppose them; but who or what can compensate the loss of his countenance and favour?

The word and providence of God furnish certain signs, whence we may infer and anticipate, without pretending to a spirit of prophecy, the time or season of his appearing, to plead his own cause, and vindicate the claims of his justice, against a wicked and rebellious people. This the Psalmist seems to have in view, when he faith, "It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they heve made void thy law†." The divine law is made void, in the sense of this passage, by those who deny its authority, or obligation; and by such as render it of none effect, as an unalterable rule of righteousness, thro' their vain traditions and inventions in religion, or wicked lives. When a deluge of sin and impiety enters, and overwhelms a land, it is time for the Lord to work; the great Lawgiver and Judge, agreeable to his usual procedure, will soon exert his power, vindicate his authority, and avenge the wrongs of the injured and oppressed; thus shewing himself a Father to the fatherless, a husband to the widow, the stranger's shield, and the orphan's stay, in the holy habitation of his providence. With communities and individuals, there is a certain measure of iniquity, which once filled up, the destroying angel receives commission, as of old‡, not to spare, neither to have pity, but to recompense their way upon their head. How ought nations, and the individuals who compose them, to fear, lest the next wrong step they take, the next criminal course they adopt, should fill up this measure, and seal their awful doom! That the time for God so to work in our native land is, alas! come, because his law is there made void, in all the senses above given, too many circumstances concur to evince.

Having, in the proceeding discourses, attempted to unfold the import of the exercise specified in the text, and pointed out some advantages which accrue from it, and should recommend it to our regard and observance,--I now proceed, as proposed, in the Third place,

To direct your attention to some of these judgments, in the way of which we are called to wait for the Lord, in the present gloomy and eventful day. What particular judgments, the prophet had in his eye in the text, is not so evident, nor is this to us so very material. Often were the Jews exposed to various calamities, as a just punishment for their sins, particularly for their idolatry, from the time they were delivered from Egypt, till the carrying away of them unto Babylon; yet, alas! they proved, in general, such, fools—such obstinate sinners, that tho' frequently brayed as in a mortar with a pestle, yet their folly cleave still to them; till wrath came upon them to the uttermost, in the destruction of their city and temple,

† Psal. cxxix. 226. ‡ Ezek ix.

their civil and religious polity by the Roman armies, sent forth to execute the vengeance foretold and threatened in the word of truth. To this day they are awful monuments of that vengeance, the blood of the Son of God, which they impiously imprecated upon themselves, and their children, still pleading against them. Their dispersion over the face of the earth, and degraded character among the nations, the name of Judas and of Jew being mentioned only with detestation, addresses a monitory language to every people professing Christianity, among whom symptoms of defection from God, and rebellion against him are to be found. It highly concerns us therefore, to bring the subject home to ourselves, and enquire by what judgments God is, in the present day animadverting on our own sins: for many are content to hear of the judgments which he inflicted upon the Jews, and other ancient nations, and of the sins that might have procured these, but cannot endure to have their attention directed to those wherewith we ourselves either are, or may be visited. They seem to think that this forms no part of a minister's duty, that he steps entirely out of his proper sphere, when he touches upon such topics. Herein they are quite mistaken. When God utters his voice as in thunder, and demands the attention of the sons of men, summons them, as with an audible voice, to prepare to meet him in the holy habitation of his providence, that grand emporium in which he meets with all nations, can his servants keep silent at such a time, and yet be guiltless? The Most High over all the earth issues his awful summons to all ranks and descriptions of men, to kings, rulers and nobles, as well as to peasants and beggars, nay, to them more especially who occupy stations of trust, rank and influence. That haughty tyrant Pharaoh, he summoned ten times within his own dominions, by his servant Moses, and the judgments which he inflicted; and because he refused to hear his voice, and obey his summons, he gave him and his formidable host to a premature and watery grave, having previously left visible marks of his vengeance all over his kingdom. When God's hand takes hold of vengeance, his enemies, be they high or low, must bow before him, yea, lick the very dust; for who would set briers and thorns before him in battle? he would go through them, and consume them altogether. None shall lend a deaf ear to his word and reproofs with impunity; and he will be justified when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth. May the Lord enable his servants to see his hand when lifted up, and to be faithful and successful in directing others to it, when called to this important duty, that they may not be mutually made to feel its awful pressure!

In directing your attention to some of these judgments wherewith the Lord is visiting us, we must consider that they

are twofold—Spiritual judgments, or such as more immediately affect the inner man, and the state of religion among us;—and Temporal, or such as affect us as members of civil society.

It is not my present purpose to speak of those afflictions with which we may be visited as families and individuals, tho' in the way of these we are also called to wait for God: for the judgments alluded to in the text seem not to have been of a private nature, but such as claimed and engaged the attention and improvement of the whole church of Israel. Some of these spiritual judgments, which are inflicted upon our nation, claim our attention in the first place; because, tho' not so sensibly felt, even by the best, nor so generally adverted to, they are doubtless more serious in their nature and consequences, and, of course, more to be dreaded than those which more immediately affect our bodies and outward estate. It is likewise proper here to remark, that there are certain things which fall under the class of sins, or judgments, according to the light in which they are viewed. The prevalence of dangerous errors, while they constitute the sin of those who embrace and propagate them, must also be regarded as their punishment, and a judgment on any land where they abound. In the parable of the sower, he is styled an enemy, who sowed tares in the field among the wheat, while the servants were asleep. A truth proceeds from the Father of lights, in whom is no darkness at all; so error is the image and offspring of the wicked one, and, like its author, seeks to hide its deformed aspect under shade and subterfuge, even when it would assume the specious garb of truth. Satan's object in sowing these tares,—in disseminating errors, is obvious. Hereby he obstructs the growth of the precious wheat, and injures the interest of the owner of the field, and the health of those who happen to take them into the stomach; or obstructs and counteracts the progress of truth, and opposes the glory of God, and the happiness of men. It was among wheat in the cultivated field that the enemy sowed his tares; and errors, that seed of the wicked one, these tinselled wares of hell, are never more dangerous and deceiving than when sown in the Church, and artfully blended with the seed of the word. The sad consequence of defection in principle, is corruption in practice. When the fool said in his heart, "There is no God;" it is added, "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." No leprosy was deemed so dangerous as that which affected the head. Errors, these tares of the field, are no plant of our heavenly Father's planting; and tho' they may be industriously, and under covert of darkness, sown in his vineyard, by the enemies of God and truth; yet shall they be rooted up, and find their final abode with their infernal author.

Some would persuade us, that it is a matter of little moment what a man believes in religion, provided his conduct correspond to the dictates of reason, and the eternal fitness of things, as they chuse to express it. According to them a man may be as acceptable to Deity with one set of principles as another, so be he is only sincere; and this fashionable and unbounded charity, is extolled as refinement and liberality of sentiment. We must however assert, that this is inconsistent with the nature of God, and contrary to the common sense of mankind. When an honest man accosts us, in a matter that he deems essential to his own honour and our safety, will he be indifferent whether we understand what he would communicate, or quite mistake, and misrepresent his sense? Apply this to God. Suppose he has revealed certain truths, which he, in his infinite wisdom, hath seen calculated to promote his glory, and our holiness, and felicity, can it be a matter of indifference to him whether we receive them in the sense he intends, or in that which our own erring, or prejudiced minds may affix? Besides, to suppose error, which is ever the oposite and enemy of truth, can promote his glory and our holiness and happiness, would be to tax the divine wisdom and goodness, and to deny the connection betwixt cause and effect. God intending his own glory, and the felicity of his people, must be allowed to have fixed on the fittest means to accomplish these ends: but, those who mantain that these ends may be equally well answered by doctrines quite the reverse of those revealed, set up their own wisdom in opposition to their Maker's, and would in effect teach him, that error and truth, tho' intrinsically different, yea, opposite in their nature, are yet the same in their moral tendency and influence. These are indeed so opposite as light and darkness—the kingdom of Satan, and the kingdom of God: for truth and righteousness form the sceptre and pillars of the latter, while the former hath error for its basis, constitution, and bulwarks.

It was when the servants were asleep that the enemy sowed tares in the field; and no season more favourable for the enemy of souls, in which to disseminate the seeds of error in the Church, than when Christians and ministers are secure, remiss, and off their guard; and he is too sagacious not to avail himself of the opportunity. An apostle thought it “ needful for him to write, and exhort, that we should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints;” and another adds, “ Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;” but how few Christians of the present day act up to the spirit of these exhortations? The truth or falsehood of any doctrine may be justly argued, and inferred from its moral

tendency. That doctrine, says a certain pious author^f, which is calculated to humble the sinner, exalt the Saviour, and promote holiness, is of God; and if so, may we not infer, that the opposite is of that evil spirit, who was a liar from the beginning, and abode not in the truth? The great Lord of the vineyard permits the enemy to sow tares, while the servants are asleep, to punish those, who are too proud of their reason and understanding, to receive the truth of the Gospel, in its native purity and simplicity, by leaving them to fall into the artful snare, or who retain the knowledge of it in unrighteousness; and also for the chastisement and trial of his own people, that they who are approved may be made manifest. The Spirit of God affixes a brand of infamy on every teacher of error; "The prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail[†]." If errors then of various kinds, and many of them of a very dangerous nature, affecting the most important articles of natural and revealed religion, abound in these lands, notwithstanding our uncommon advantages; and if these are industriously propagated by some, who, perhaps, professed, and solemnly vowed to maintain the contrary, and as eagerly received by others; must we not own, that this is a serious judgment from the Lord, if not an harbinger of the removal of the gospel candlestick, at the same time it enhances our national guilt, and the extreme danger of individuals? Too many circumstances concur, besides what may be collected from the pulpit and the press, in ascertaining the melancholy truth. A flood of error hath overspread the land, and is carrying myriads before it, of all ranks and professions, especially of the young and unwary; while the means of religious instruction are neglected or despised. O that when the enemy comes thus in, like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord would lift up a standard!

The suspension of the sacred influences of the Holy Spirit, so absolutely necessary to the success of the gospel, and the salvation of men, should doubtless be regarded as a judgment, much to be lamented and deprecated wherever it prevails. That these are really necessary to sanctify both the prosperous and adverse events of providence, and to render the oracles of truth, the power, as they are the wisdom of God for salvation--an effectual mean of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in faith and holiness to eternal life, we all profess to believe, and, I trust, many of us experimentally feel. The gospel itself is styled "the ministration of the Spirit," and it is only when he awakes as the north wind, comes as the south,

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and blows upon his garden, that the splices of it shall flow out; the ends of its administration be answered. This appears evident from the history of our Lord's public ministry, that teacher sent from God. Tho' he spake as never man spake--spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes, confirming same time his doctrines by the most extraordinary and beneficent miracles; yet few seem to have been converted by his personal ministry; the number of professed disciples, assembled at the election of one to fill the place of the traitor Judas, being no more than one hundred and twenty. The reason is assigned,—"the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified;" that is, not given in such copious influences, as after his exaltation to heaven. One sermon of the apostle Peter was the mean of converting three thousand, who became the bright ornaments of that faith which they once vilified and opposed. Let the advocates of reason, who would explode the necessity of Divine, or supernatural influences, to the success of the gospel, account for the very different success of our Lord, and his apostles, upon their principles. Surely he was as great a master of reason as the best of them, and not inferior in the powers of elocution, or fervency of address to any of his apostles, or of the modern apostles of a Priestly or any of his coadjutors; and yet he found cause to adopt the complaint of the prophet, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The arm of the Lord is his power, which is exerted by the agency of his Spirit; agreeable to which it is promised to Messiah by the Father, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

Tho' the gospel should be continued with a people, yet, if God is provoked to say, They are joined to their idols, let them alone, my Spirit shall no more strive with them, how serious, yea, fatal the consequence! They that are unholy, will then remain unholy still, and they that are filthy, filthy still;—iniquity will abound, and the love of many wax cold. That this judgment is at present inflicted in these lands, at least, in such a measure as claims our waiting speedily for God for its removal, too many circumstances concur to ascertain. Tho' we still enjoy many religious advantages, have the word of eternal life in our private dwellings, and access to attend its public administration; yet how few are visibly converted thereby from their evil ways? and have not real Christians cause to lament, that they are, in a great degree, strangers to these divine attainments, whereof we have both read and heard? How few are pricked in their hearts under the word, and made to cry out, "What shall we do to be saved?" how shall we escape the wrath to come, and inherit a blessing, even life for evermore? Both Ministers and Christians experience little in our day of divine

power accompanying the gospel, and rendering it the power and wisdom of God for salvation—quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. In a spiritual sense, our heaven is made brass, and our earth iron; the former refusing the dew, and the early and latter rain of divine grace, and the latter its increase, thus causing a famine worse than that of bread and water. If these are withheld, how can the pools of gospel ordinances be filled with the waters of the sanctuary;—the streams of the pure river of the water of life, that proceedeth from the throne of God and the Lamb, make glad the city of our God; or the flock of his pasture be led beside the still waters? The word and ordinances of the gospel, through the unmerited favour of Heaven, are still continued in many corners of our land, and with different denominations of Christians; but, alas! how little relish have many for these—how much are they undervalued! They are ready to say, like the Jews of old, of the bread of life, and the sincere milk of the word, “Our souls loath this light bread”—“these are hard sayings, who can bear them?” for “the full soul loathes the honey comb; while to the hungry soul even every bitter thing is sweet.” Many seem, in effect, to say, What a weariness is it to serve the Lord? when will the Sabbath be over, that we may apply to our secular concerns, or pursue our amusements, and darling pleasures? Tho’ we are not yet visited with shut sanctuaries and silent Sabbaths, which claims our gratitude, and demands our improvement; yet how many silence the one, and shut the other to themselves? while to all, the Lord seems as a way-faring man that turneth aside, and tarrieth only for a night.

Our sins, and contempt of privileges purchased with blood divine, have provoked the King of Zion, to withdraw, in a threatening measure, his life, light, and joy-giving presence; and no wonder the word should prove thence a dead letter, and its ordinances but as wells without water, and clouds without rain, disappointing our raised hopes and expectations. The time was, even in these lands, and some living did witness it, when numbers were born to God by the gospel as in a day—when such power and efficacy accompanied its administration, as made the stubborn hearts of sinners bow before it, converted worshipping assemblies into so many Bochims, places of tears or mourning; leading disciples to say, “It is good for us to be here,” and obstinate sinners, of various descriptions, to own that God was with them of a truth. Then days of the Son of man were enjoyed, times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Christ fed among the lilies, came into his garden, and eat his pleasant

fruits, while his people enjoyed the animating tokens of his gracious presence, and their spikenard sent forth the smell thereof. Are there not some now hearing me, who can easily recollect the time when it was far otherwise with them,—when they could say, from their happy experience, the Lord was in yonder, and yonder place, such a day and ordinance was a day of Heaven, a time of refreshing to our souls, and, we trust, to the souls of many? Divided, unhappily, as professing Christians, in these lands are, in their sentiments on other things, in this they are generally agreed, That the ordinances of the gospel are not now attended with that divine power and influence, which have been often experienced in the Church of God; few being, comparatively, reclaimed from their sinful courses, while the godly live at a poor and low rate, their leanness and barrenness testifying to the face against them. The consolations of the Spirit are both few and small, compared to what they have often been in times past, and what our fathers have told us. The effects of this are visible to every one who possesses spiritual discernment.

Is not religion with many dwindled into a lifeless form, while thousands have either given up, or never had even the form of godliness? Iniquity aboundeth, and the love of many waxeth cold. Brotherly love, among the professed followers of Jesus, is scarcely known; and the moon of the world eclipseth the beams of the sun of righteousness, and the glories of the heavenly state. Many are so keen upon their worldly pursuits, and sensual pleasures, that they resemble the Gadarenes of old, who preferred their swine to Jesus; and, because he touched this part of their property, charged him to leave their coasts, in which they found, to their cost, an immediate compliance. Or they are like the inn-keeper at Bethlehem, who would not exclude Christ altogether, but then he must put up with the accommodation of the stable, and the manger. They give him not the heart; for it is faint and languid in his cause, or totally averse to his service. At best they are neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm; and no wonder then religion should be regarded merely as a bye work: while all the powers of the soul, and all the affections of the heart unite in rendering homage at the shrine of the Mammon of unrighteousness. They are uniform and assiduous in the pursuit of worldly or sinful pleasures, but mere fluggards or idlers in religion, whose apparent goodness proves like a morning cloud, or early dew that soon passeth away. Hence too, many who seem to have begun in the Spirit, and for a time to have run well, draw back, it is to be feared, to perdition, end in the flesh, in the gratification of their corrupt inclinations, and so have their latter end worse than their beginning. Of

such God saith, " If any man draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him;" that is, shall utterly abhor him.

Tho' this spiritual judgment be little dreaded, feit, or lamented, yet a most alarming one it is, and shall one day be both felt and lamented. When sinners provoke God, to cease to be a reprover to them, and to forbid his Spirit to strive with them, their destruction becomes inevitable, and aggravated by this consideration, that light hath come to the world, and shines clearly around them, but that they chuse darkness in preference to this light. The longer they are spared, and the greater and more numerous the advantages they enjoy, if still misimproved, the more aggravated their future doom, and the more keen and bitter the agonies of their future remorse and self-reproach-er. That this is one of the judgments of the present day, there can be little doubt, and the small concern it gives by far the greater part of professing Christians, is a dreadful proof of the melancholy truth—An awful symptom of the disease consequent upon it, and the ruin to which it is a certain fore-runner, if divine mercy do not prevent.

The probable causes of this evil are various. In what different ways is the spirit of God grieved, and his motions, and operations opposed and quenched! Some deny his God-head, others would explain his distinct and personal existence into a mere influence, and would totally explode the moral necessity of his supernatural grace, to form, improve and perfect the divine life in the soul. Even the best exceedingly fail in their duty towards him, and in humble and constant reliance on his gracious aids. It is to be feared, that many professed teachers of Christianity, if we may judge from the specimens of their labours published to the world, do despite to, or overlook the Holy Spirit, while the success of the gospel is attributed to the power of moral suasion, or the due exertion of the innate virtues of the human heart. Such as perpetually repeat a composed prayer, or servilely read a legal harangue to their audience, a too common practice in our nation, do this Sacred Agent little honour; and no wonder he should refuse to concur with their performances, or make themselves contemptible before all the people. By this means the pulpit is sunk beneath the bar, the bench, and the Senate, and the Ministers of religion bring a bad report on the Master they profess to serve, as if he sent his servants a warfare on their own charges, and were an austere Master, seeking to gather where he had not sown, and to reap where he had not sown. He is the Lord of the harvest, to whom we are exhorted to pray, that he would send forth, or thrust out, as the word imports, labourers into his harvest, whom he makes overseers over the flock of Jesus. Those who have no eye to him in aiming at this service, nor seek his assistance

in it, or blessing upon it, offer him a gross insult, as if their own talents were quite sufficient for all this, independent of his aid and blessing. They that honour him, he will honour; but they who thus despise him, shall be lightly esteemed.

Is it then surprising, that his influences should be so little felt, where they are so much disregarded? May he not justly leave many worshipping assemblies, yea, our native land, like the mountains of Gilboa of old, on which neither dew, nor rain descended;—or like the heath in the wilderness that knows not when good cometh? Alas! the once fruitful field is become as a desert, or barren mountains—the vineyard is overgrown with briers and thorns, and every noxious weed—plants which our heavenly Father hath not planted, and must be one-time or other plucked up. Errors in doctrine, and immoralities in practice are the natural consequence of the judgment under review; for when these come in as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord alone can raise an effectual standard against them; and when they greatly prevail, it is an evident token of his displeasure, and the suspension of his heavenly influence.

Mistake me not however, as if I meant to say, that he hath totally forsaken our isle, or any denomination of Christians therein, who hold by Jesus the great Head, and exercise a proper dependence on the grace of his Holy Spirit. Wherever Christ hath a church, there he is by his Spirit, as well as by his word; for he walketh amidst the golden candlesticks, and holdeth the stars in his right hand. Where he has any sinners to convert, or saints to edify, there will he come to bless his word—come as a refiner's fire, and fuller's soap. But while we should bless God even for the day of small things—for still deigning to grant any token of his gracious presence in our religious assemblies; let us be deeply sensible, that we have, by our sins, by our low esteem of the gospel, and the grace of his Spirit, sinned away, in a great measure, his gracious presence. If our day is not decreasing, in regard to divine light, sure it is a winter one, in respect of sacred heat, the purifying and rejoicing influences of the Spirit of all grace, and the heavenly flame of divine love.

The removal of the Gospel itself, from many corners in the land, once highly favoured therewith, must be viewed as a spiritual judgment of a very serious nature. The gospel may be continued with a people, after divine influences are greatly withheld, as hath been observed in the preceding particular; but when that is removed, this awful judgment is completed. This our Lord threatens to execute upon the church at Ephesus and Laodicea, and did actually execute in process of time. To the first he saith, “Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will

come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." To the last, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art luke-warm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." Are these words of course, mere, empty, unmeaning sounds? No--The churches to which they were immediately addressed found them an awful reality, and so shall every church that retains the things reprobated in them, not admonished by their example. Let those then who think their mountain stands so strong, that it shall never be moved, take heed, lest God hide his face, and abandon them to darkness and trouble. Let the men of the world enjoy temporal good things, what they shall eat, what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be cloathed, and they give themselves little trouble about enjoying the gospel in its native purity and simplicity. But remove this from a city, a village, or nation, and it may be said, The glory is departed. What chiefly rendered Judea the glory of all lands was, that the true God was known and worshipped there; that its inhabitants were favoured, by the prophets, with visitations of the Almighty, and express predictions of Messiah, who appeared in due time among them. Because they knew not, in their day, the things that belonged to their peace, they came to be hid from their eyes; and because they refused to walk in the light while they had it, God was provoked to remove their candlestick out of its place, and leave them to be covered with gross darkness. Such as tread in their steps, have reason to fear that they shall be made partakers of their plagues.

These lands have been long and highly favoured, in the course of divine providence; but we have abused our privileges; and God would be just and righteous in depriving us of them. That he hath done so already, in many instances, we have every cause to fear. Tho' God still maintains a lamp for his Anointed among us, raiseth up some faithful labourers in his vineyard, in which we should rejoice, wherever they appear, and give God the glory; yet can it not be said that all the corners of the land are favoured with such. Thro' the operation of the degrading and oppressive yoke of Patronage, many parochial charges are reduced into mere sinecures; while the poor people must either provide the gospel in some other connection, or be content to perish for lack of knowledge: for they must either submit to the intruded hireling, be their opinion of his piety and soundness in the faith what it may, or be deprived of so inestimable a blessing, in their former connection. The providence of God hath made Dissenters of different denominations the mean of securing the gospel, and its institutions, to many, in different parts of the united king-

doms, that seemed to be otherwise forlorn and destitute; and where this help cannot be obtained, the consequence is too visible to escape notice, and too serious, not to be lamented by those, who have the best interest of their fellow men at heart. Those who exercise that usurped and impious claim, without any regard to the glory of God, or the will and edification of the people, have a solemn account to give, and a day of wrath waiting them. They may see in the present wandering and fugitive state of the late patrons of a neighbouring nation, what they themselves deserve, and have reason to dread, in the course of a retributive Providence. Long had these unhappy men, with their tools, a servile and bigotted priesthood, shaved, to use the simile of the prophet, the poor, oppressed and deluded people; and the day hath come in which the Lord hath shaved themselves with a razor that is hired, even the head and the hair of the feet; and it hath also consumed the beard†. Be the instruments of their degradation, in a moral view, what they may, they are doubtless employed by Providence to punish these workers of iniquity, and in doing the work of Heaven, they shall not be without their reward, tho' vengeance should be taken on their inventions. Did people once see the nature, and feel the importance of the rights of the Christian church, that commonwealth, where prince and peasant are upon a level, as they do their secular rights, no fellow mortal durst presume to wreath such a yoke about their neck, or if they did, the effort would be in vain. But woe shall one time or other be to those, who take advantage of their ignorance or supineness, to accomplish their own purposes!

What our Lord said to his disciples, is fulfilled in our own times, and, I fear, in many places of our own nation: "The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it*." Such days are precious, yet will not be always continued with a people, who make light of the means of grace, nor study to walk in the light of his word while they have it. Tho' he may bear long, and often call when they refuse, stretch out his hand, when they regard not: but set at nought all his counsel, and would none of his reproofs; yet may they expect that he will also laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh; when their fear cometh as desolation, and their destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon them. Then shall they call upon him, but he will not answer; they shall seek him early, but they shall not find him†. Days of the Son of man may be desired, when they shall not be grant-

* Isa. vii. 20.

* Luke xvii. 22. † Prov. i. 24.—28.

ed which should induce to improve them while enjoyed. There are many places in our own nation that once were favoured with this important privilege; but how sadly now changed! What is said of Jerusalem may be applied to them, they were once full of judgment, righteousness lodged in them, but now murderers, those who vend a poison of a most deadly nature, set off perhaps, in a golden cup, while many receive it as the most wholesome viand, and others feel and lament the sad reverse. Thus their silver is become dross, their wine mixed with water*, or with a potion of a most deadly nature. Though we hope there are many who both feel and lament the loss they sustain in not enjoying the gospel in its public administration, and would highly prize the crumbs that fall from the children's table elsewhere; yet in respect of the multitude at large, they perceive no want, they feel no anxiety after such a blessing, and this results from their ignorance, their worldly mindedness, and their carnal security. But will it be so always? Verily not. When death and judgment overtake them, if not sooner, they shall earnestly desire to see a day of the Son of man, and they shall not see it.

That errors of various kinds, and some of them of a most gross and dangerous nature, abound in our land, is too obvious to admit a moment's doubt. With many it is not the gospel of Jesus that is brought to the ears of men, but a spurious system of human device, which originates from, and flatters the pride of our depraved nature. This system, however plausible and flattering, is dangerous both to those who propagate, and to those who imbibe it; for says the wise Proverbialist in Israel, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death†." Every system of doctrine that deviates from divine truth, is in opposition to it, and calculated to promote, in one form or other, only the interests of Satan's kingdom. Some are however, more glaringly erroneous and absurd than others; but the nearer any system comes to truth, if it fall short of it, the more apt to deceive. How absurd the tenet which a noted Bishop of our own nation hath advanced somewhere in his writings: "We are to atone for our great sins, by weeping; and for our little sins, by sighing." In this unhappy sentiment, the Bishop is not singular; for many seem to entertain the same, and things near a kin to it, tho' they may express themselves with more caution and modesty: whence the greater danger to the cause of truth and genuine piety.

* Isa. i. 21. 22.

† Prov. xiv. 12.

+ Bishop Taylor.

Early there were some that troubled the church, “ and would pervert the gospel of Christ.” Remarkable is the saying of Paul, in contemplating this gloomy aspect, whence it appears, that errors in doctrine are not quite so innocent and harmless as some, in their excess of charity, would represent them. “ But tho’ we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” To bid such God speed, in their exertions to pervert the gospel of Christ, is in effect to wish the establishment of the kingdom of darkness, on the ruins of genuine Christianity. Such may be very diligent and assiduous, to spread and defend their noxious tenets; for, in this respect, they are often wiser and more active in their generation than the children of light; yet, so far from being entitled to the honourable character of labourers in the Lord’s harvest, they are but the servants and instruments of the wicked one, serving his cause in the earth, by sowing and watering these tares in the field, which are so pernicious to the growth and prosperity of the precious wheat. Do they deserve honour and emolument for this? but in these verily, they have their reward. God affixes a brand to their character—“ The prophet that teacheth lies he is the tail;” and our Lord tells us, that they are the least in his kingdom,—make no part of it, tho’ numbered by men among his subjects. The powerful support lately given to one, who vended doctrines allowed to be subversive of the most essential principles of the Christian faith; and the feeble exertion of professed friends to the truth as in Jesus, on that memorable occasion; with the prevalence of such fatal doctrines over the nation, both from the pulpit and the press, while they find so many among different denominations disposed to embrace and patronize them; all this plainly shews, that the gospel is fast banishing from among us, and hath already been actually banished from many pulpits and corners; which is doubtless a grievous judgment from the Lord. Serious Christians will lament it as such, and as for those who embrace and disseminate such tenents, or look on with little or no concern, if they will not believe their danger, we must leave them to the Lord, assured they will one day find this to be a judgment, of a most serious nature—that God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to believe a lie, that they might finally perish, because they hated the truth, and thro’ pride of heart, and of the wisdom that man teacheth, would not submit to the conduct and instruction of the Holy Spirit. That

† Gal. i. 8. 9.

‡ Isa. ix. 15.

land is, without doubt, visited with the judgments of the Almighty, where such things not only exist, but abound. In the way of this judgment therefore, and the one adverted to in the preceding particular, let Christians wait for the Lord lamenting their prevalence in our day and nation, and imploring the copious effusions of the Spirit of all grace, till he shew mercy upon us; and turn, in this respect, our captivity, as the streams in the south.

The diversity of sentiment in religion, and consequent divisions that prevail among professing Christians in these lands, ought to be viewed as a judgment or chastisement from the Lord, especially when these occasion alienation of affection, and mutual jealousies, censure and misrepresentation. That the former exist among us, the divisions and subdivisions, into which the professed followers of the undivided Jesus are formed, are a standing but melancholy proof: and that the latter sometimes unhappily prevail, as a consequence, tho' not a necessary one, of these divisions, too many circumstances occur, to leave room to call the truth of it in question. In this respect, "the anger of the Lord hath divided us," so that we see not eye to eye, neither draw equally in Christ's yoke. Differences in religion however, especially in matters allowed to be of less consequence, might furnish scope to the exercise of Christian charity, mutual forbearance, and brotherly love; instead of producing, as is too often the case, an opposite effect. The exhortation is addressed to all that bear the name, and profess the faith of Jesus, however rarely exemplified in their practice; "Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." This exhortation, doubtless, applies to the different denominations of Christians, in their carriage towards one another; unless we suppose, they possess a right to unchristianize each other, on account of the things in which they may happen to differ. The increase of parties in religion, is perhaps, owing, in most instances, to the oppression, and infringement on the rights of conscience, exercised in Established churches; the fewer number arising from enlightened and spiritual views of the Redeemer's kingdom. How productive hath the political engine of Patronage, that dear brood of the consecrated union of church and state, been of such consequences!

It is much to be lamented that, while the enemies of Christianity are so united in their opposition to the faith and practice thereof, its professed friends should be so often at variance

among themselves, weakening one another's hands, and discouraging each other's hearts, in the common cause; or, in the expressive language of the apostle, biting and devouring one another, till they are in danger of being consumed one of another†. Let all Christians, forgetting the things wherein they differ, unite their best efforts in supporting and defending the common cause; learning a lesson even from the enemies of Christ, in their opposition to his person and interest: for Herod and Pilate forgot their former variance, and were reconciled, when the Son of God was arraigned, and about to be condemned, and crucified. Every denomination of Christians have their excellencies, which claim our esteem and imitation, as well as their defects; and these should never be mentioned but with a view and desire of their reformation: for they must not act towards one another, like the fly that passes over all the sound parts of the human body, and alights upon its sores, hereby giving additional pain. It is however, owned with pleasure, that a spirit of mutual forbearance, and seeming Christian charity, appears to be of late on the increase; we would gladly hope as an happy presage of the approach of that desirable period, when there shall be nothing to hurt, or to destroy in God's holy mountain; unless we can suppose that this moderation proceeds, unhappily, from a growing indifference about concerns of the last importance. A spirit of bigotry and intolerance is now exploded in speculation, and more generally than heretofore banished from all parties in practice; unless in some instances it appear, where least expected—even with those who profess superior refinement of taste, and liberality of sentiment. Tho' God can, and in the course of his providence, will bring good out of the differences that subsist among professing Christians, whatever may be culpable in these or their fruits; yet they cannot be viewed, in themselves, in any other light than a judgment on the land where they prevail; especially, when they create alienation of affection, prove a bar to the discharge of social and relative duties, and obstruct the course of universal benevolence, their too common attendants.

I might also observe, that contempt or neglect of revealed religion, and its sacred institutions, and the consequent increase of infidelity, the favourite system of the fashionable world, is a serious judgment from above on these sinful lands, and particularly on those who embrace such delusions; and, as the agents of the father of lies, and the purveyors of his household, exert every nerve to promote his cause and interest among men.

But, as this forms a dark and deep trait in our national guilt, I waive it here, and pass on to point out some of these Temporal judgments, which this, and our other provoking sins, have brought upon the nation; and which, if mercy do not speedily interpose, may bring us to the lowest depths of public misery.

Of the various temporal judgments with which these sinful lands are visited, That diversity of sentiment, respecting the concerns of the Public at large, and the propriety, justice and necessity of certain measures, with the unhappy alienation of heart, calumny, animosity and misrepresentation, too often, it is to be feared, consequent upon it, is not the least serious in its nature, and foreboding in its consequences. Every man has a right to think, judge, and determine for himself, both in politics and religion; and this right it is his duty to exercise; because his own interest, and the interest of his fellow creatures, both for time and eternity, are deeply concerned in the matter. The result of his deliberate reflexions and inquiries, he has also, a right to express, and communicate, as occasions offer, and prudence may direct, provided this be done without infringing on the just rights of another; and to attempt to deprive an intelligent, accountable being of the exercise of this unalienable right, would be a piece of oppression and tyranny of the most detestable, and pernicious nature. Men may exercise mutual forbearance, in the concerns of this world, as well as in those of the next, without violating the harmony of social order, or interrupting the mutual interchange of kind offices: for perhaps, scarce any two men can be found, to think in all respects alike, upon any given topic. Would it not be uncharitable in the extreme, to suppose and assert, that, because such persons happen to differ from us in certain points of their religious creed, tho' their conduct should in all other respects become Christians, they must therefore be heretics, enemies to God, to truth, and their fellow men? and would it not be equally uncharitable and unjust, to make certain political tenets the test of loyalty in the state, branding all that do not, or cannot come up to them, as enemies to lawful authority, and to the peace and prosperity of their country; notwithstanding their demeanour in other things be peaceable, and also respectful and obedient to the laws and institutions of that country, wherein these are founded in reason and common sense, and do not invade the duty every-man previously owes to himself, and to God, the original source of all authority, to whose will all delegated authority is subjected in its exercise, and at whose bar its every decision must be reviewed.

Should any swerve from the path of duty, from whatever motives, they are still to be treated as erring brethren, and re-

stored, if possible, in the spirit of meekness; not surely, by magnifying their faults, misrepresenting their conduct, pronouncing decisively on their secret motives, in opposition to their avowed declarations, or condemning them unheard, and attributing to them designs, which they had not for a moment entertained, and at the thought of which their hearts would revolt, if an individual or two, professing to be of their number, and in their secret, should be found wicked enough to contrive, and fool-hardy enough to attempt, or propose to execute such designs. This would be to tempt even the virtuous to swerve from their duty, for uncandid or oppressive measures make even wise men mad; and also to render bad men worse, if not desperate. That such a mode however, hath been not seldom pursued of late, is too notorious; and even in solemn appeals to Heaven in the pulpit, and at the consecration of military standards, that fashionable and celebrated rite, such things often form a principal part of the liturgy. The pens too of hirelings have been often employed, and the channels of public intelligence filled, I fear, with calumny, misrepresentation, and falsehood, which could serve no other end than to fan a flame already burning,—no other purpose than to increase a judgment lamentably serious already. Such is the constitution of human nature, that the most direct way to make a person, or persons our enemies, is to represent and treat them as such: for love, and the native expressions of it, do not more naturally produce a corresponding affection, than such a conduct the very temper it manifests.

If a part of the community claim the right to applaud and support measures fraught with misery to millions of the human race, and to our own nation in particular,—and also fraught with immense guilt against God, if not found, when weighed in his balance, both just and necessary; why deny the other the privilege of entering their dissent, of disapproving of, and testifying against such measures, when both they, and their posterity must bear the burden so accumulated, and be involved in the consequences, in common with those that push and patronize these destructive measures? Time will shew whether of the two have wisdom and justice on their side, and most cause to complain; if the events, which have already occurred, are not sufficient to reach conviction. Can any behold the miseries of his country and of his species, and these rapidly increasing, and not feel? and can he feel as he ought, and not express his feelings and apprehensions; seeing, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh?

Some seem to place loyalty to the ruling powers, and love of their country, in accusations of their brethren, and fellow subjects,—in narrowly watching their words and actions; wrest-

ing and misrepresenting the most innocent, or the most meritorious; and in circulating invidious reports to their prejudice,—so that the pulpit itself is no security against the assaults of these unhallowed weapons, which every one must have more or less felt, who has had the courage and fidelity to plead for God against the sins of a rebellious and ungodly nation, whence they have become the song of the drunkard, and the subject of invective and burlesque. And, it is well, if such unchristian conduct hath not been sometimes countenanced, or rewarded by some, whose rank and station ought to place them above countenancing, in the least, the meanness and malignity of such a carriage. Have not the outrages of a mob been consecrated, or at least excused, by making Church, King and Constitution the order of the day? The mode some in their wisdom take to express their loyalty, instead of proving them the real friends of their King and Country, serve to sap the pillars of the throne, and the prosperity of the state. What good purpose can measures serve, that tend to make odious discriminations in society, and attach public odium to any class of citizens?

Such may profess themselves loyal and patriotic, and be deemed so by others, but we hesitate not to say, that all who sow or cherish the seeds of dissension among brethren, are, in effect, whatever they may profess, the greatest enemies of both, as time may discover, if there be any truth in the sacred oracles, or in the history of mankind, both which are written for our admonition. The steps they pursue, tend to widen a breach, already too large, and to place the desirable prospect of a cordial union, between the different ranks in society, at a greater distance. Our blessed Lord informs us, that “a kingdom divided against itself, is brought into desolation;” and adds an apostle, after giving this precept, as the sum total of the whole law, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” Such a spirit is lamented by the prophet as a great calamity, while he ascribes it to God as a righteous judgment: “Thro’ the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother.” The temper and conduct here described, tend to increase the division of a kingdom against itself, as they rankle the spirits of men, furnish fuel to their corruptions, and a pretext for justifying their mutual censures and severity, and thus, they too, naturally produce what the apostle terms biting and devouring one another, which endangers their mutual destruction. Than this there is not a

more unfavourable symptom in our case, portending our impending judgment, and approaching ruin. May Heaven avert the dreadful omen! prevent what is recorded by another prophet being realized among us: "The time is come, the day draweth near, let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn; for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof," upon all ranks and descriptions of men in the land, because all had sinned, corrupted their ways, and grievously offended the Lord their God. You may see at your leisure, the temper adverted to, in the above particular, described by the prophet Jeremiah, in the 9th chapter of his prophecy, and also elsewhere].

Ought we not, Brethren, to regard the late pestilential fever which hath cut off so many of our fellow subjects in our West India islands, with the unhappy commotions that still alarm there, as a token of God's displeasure, and a judgment upon these lands? How unfeeling the remark, should any be capable of making it, that these things happen at a distance, that we only hear of them as matter of news, as if we ourselves had little or no concern in them! Have not many at home near relations there, in whose death they must feel themselves afflicted? Do not the inhabitants of these isles, and we belong to one nation? and are we not attached to each other, by several ties? shall one part then suffer, and the whole not feel with it? The mortality occasioned by that fatal distemper hath been exceeding great, not only among the planters, but also in our army and navy, to whom it hath proved more fatal than the sword. The slaves furnish the only exception from its dreadful depredations. As a proof of its malignity, I need only refer you to a fact, communicated in all our public papers. A court martial, consisting of eighteen persons, was obliged to break up, without finishing their business, because, during their sitting, no fewer than the one half of their number were cut off by this malignant distemper. If we may credit private accounts, several thousands of our seamen died, in the course of a few weeks, in the very haven of one of these islands. And now again, as we learn from late accounts, the same fatal fever hath commenced its ravages, and may destroy its thousands, and tens of thousands, without leaving them time, or ability, to reflect on the past, or seek preparation for the future. Have not these events a language? Are they not the doings of that God, who is wonderful in counsel, and terrible in working, who hath power to kill, and to cast both soul and body into hell, and out of whose hands none can deliver?

May we not see in them the just animadversions of Heaven,

on the criminal part we have so long had in the inhuman traffic of our fellow creatures, the grievous servitude they have so long endured in these devoted islands, and the basely criminal part we have taken, in holding fast the infernal system, and refusing to let it go, upon the remonstrance of God, by his vicegerent conscience speaking in the mouths of many thousands, while the highest authority in the kingdom have, when sitting in their legislative capacity, pronounced it "cruel, inhuman and unjust." But blinded and obstinate sinners act, as if they had rather perish in their own way, than prosper in God's way; and God will leave them to their choice, and to reap accordingly. A spirit now prevails among the Slaves which threatens the most alarming consequences. What ravages have they committed! How many white people, lately in affluent circumstances, have they stripped of their wealth, or sacrificed to a spirit of revenge, which the efforts to hold them in a state of degraded servitude too much justify. They have been of eminent service to our enemies in the conquests they have made in these quarters; and we have been assured that on one of these islands no fewer than eighteen thousand of them are at present assembled, and trained to the use of arms to oppose us; when a different treatment on our part might have made them our firm friends, thus secured, and a natural bulwark to these isles, against an invading foe.

It was not a little observable, as marking the retributive justice of Heaven, what took place at the reduction of one of these isles lately. The principal fort of it, having been stormed by about eight thousand revolted slaves, now in the pay of our enemies, accompanied with only about four hundred white people, was obliged to surrender, after much carnage, to this fable legion; and no terms could be obtained for the refugee planters, who had a little before sworn allegiance to the British government, and put themselves under its protection.—All that could be procured was a covered boat, in which nine-and-twenty only were safely carried away; the rest, to the amount of five hundred, were shot by their own revolted slaves, with their hands tied behind their back, and sunk in a ditch up to the middle. What made this execution the more worthy of notice was, that when we got possession of the island, a few weeks before, the head Commander on the spot, issued a proclamation, requiring all the revolted slaves within six weeks to return to their former masters, else, if apprehended, they would be immediately hanged. Within that space of time, if I remember well, they had it in their power to dictate the terms of a capitulation, at the point of the bayonet, and the mouth of the cannon, when all his intreaties could not procure the lives

of these very planters, whom he had so lately taken under the protection of our government! And, ah! how mortifying thus to fall by the hands of their own slaves! These remarks are due to the providence of God, who is a Father to the fatherless, the stranger's shield, and the orphan's stay, and the scourge of the oppressor, in this holy habitation, and therefore I offer no apology for making them, tho' they will not relish with many, who never chuse to acknowledge the righteous hand of Heaven in such dispensations. But "because they regard not the works of the Lord," in this and other events of the day, "nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up."†

Our affairs in that quarter present at the time a very gloomy aspect. From the attempts, and late success of the enemy, the spirit that discovers itself among the slaves, in consequence of what the legislature of a neighbouring nation have done to emancipate them, and also from the just indignation of Heaven against our crimes and oppressions in that quarter, there is reason to fear, if the present foolish and ruinous war is protracted much longer, that they will soon cease to be ours for ever. And tho' peace should be the mean of securing them for a time, yet there is much ground to apprehend, that such will be the issue; and what can be more equitable in righteous Heaven than to make those or their seed proprietors of that soil, which their united labours have so long cultivated, and their tears, sweat and blood so often watered? That such events were not far distant, the more pious and reflecting part of the Community saw reason to apprehend from the late conduct of our Legislature, respecting that much injured race‡. We are indeed sending a formidable force to defend our property there, and repel the invasion of our foes in that quarter; but there is much reason to fear, considering the awful aspect of Providence on these islands, whose inhabitants have been long since reputed the most wicked people on the face of the earth, that they are only sent to find a premature grave in a clime so hostile to the constitution of Britons. God is justly provoked both with those who defend them, and those that are meant to be defended; and may therefore, involve them in one common ruin, without the least impeachment to his justice. The judgments of Heaven, awfully commenced there, may be brought nearer home, except we repent. This is the usual way with God, who does not stir up all his wrath at once, but gives time and warnings to repent; and such a gradation is observable in his pro-

† Psal. xxviii. 5.

‡ Of this mind was the Author too, as may be seen by consulting some tracts he published since the question of the Slave Trade was first agitated. If he has erred in other things, the event justifies his fears on that subject.

cedure with these lands. If the judgments already inflicted produce not their desired effect, and that they have not yet produced, we may have a fearful looking for more grievous plagues. Whatever bars and obstacles may lie in the way of peace with our earthly enemies, there are obstacles still more formidable in the way of peace with God, whom we have provoked by our iniquities. His purpose will stand, and he will do all his pleasure.

When speaking of the Lord's judgments upon these lands, as a just punishment of our sins, we ought not to overlook that scarcity of the necessaries of life, with which we have been of late threatened, nor the unhappy emotions it has produced in various places over the nation. These things speak a language audible to the deafest ear, and intelligible to the dullest understanding. Famine is one of the Lord's sore judgments, such a heavy scourge to a people as to be, when inflicted and felt in its extreme rigour, more to be dreaded and deprecated than either the devouring sword, or the pestilence that walketh in darkness. When God had destroyed the old world by water, for their extreme wickedness, in the midst of wrath, he remembered mercy, and promised to his servant Noah, That while the earth remained, seed-time and harvest should not cease. This promise he verifies in the course of his providence, notwithstanding partial, or local corrections, by giving us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, thus filling our hearts with food and gladness. Never would mankind experience any interruption of the regular succession of these, or be doomed to feel the dreadful scourge of famine in their borders, were they obedient to their Maker's laws, and observant of his institutions.

For some years back he hath frowned upon us both in seed-time and harvest, and though he hath not caused the fruits of the earth to perish from the use of man and beast; yet were they bestowed upon us with visible tokens of his displeasure, and that only after we had been threatened with cleanness of teeth. Among the many causes that might justly procure us this chastisement, surely none of the least is, the undervaluing of the bread of life, which too many professing Christians, of all ranks and denominations, loathe, and count as light food: for "the full soul loathes the honey comb, while to the hungry soul even every bitter thing is sweet."

Of the various calamities inseparable from a state of war, famine is not the least grievous and intolerable, whence we find it often in scripture classed with the devouring sword, and inflicted upon the Jews, particularly at their final overthrow,

as one of its most horrid attendants. Few, if any will presume to deny, that the disastrous hostilities in which we have been unhappily engaged for some years, have contributed not a little to this apprehended, and, in many places, severely felt calamity. But other causes must be allowed to have had also their influence in producing this evil. When certain laws are framed, either with intention to befriend the land-holder, or calculated in their operation to produce this effect, by preventing the fruits of the earth from finding their level, like water by a free and unrestrained communication all over the country, the natural consequence is, that certain districts must suffer, while the poor every where are precluded from reaping the benefit of the bounty of Heaven, to that extent they might otherwise enjoy it. Every system that tends to circumscribe the goodness of the Almighty, as the great author of nature, and Father of all, must be partial in its operation, and pernicious to myriads in its consequences. Of this nature, however, is that concerted scheme of monopoly, so nearly allied to, and so naturally resulting from that alluded to above, which prevails among us, and is carried into such dangerous lengths in our land. A number of unfeeling wretches combine, in effect, together, to advance or keep up the price of every article of life, and thus injure, and effectually oppress the community at large, for the sake of their own private and sordid gain. These hard-hearted sons of avarice are insatiable as the grave; for their ruling passion, like the horse leech, incessantly cries, Give, give. They are a much greater nuisance to society than the highway robber, or concealed thief, the evil they occasion being much more serious and extensive; and, pardon me, if I say, are fully as deserving of the gibbet, when clearly convicted of such guilt. These vermine in the state—these covert thieves and oppressors, grind, in the expressive language of scripture, the faces of the poor, and so procure their odium and maledictions; for saith the wise man, "He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him," which is not the curse causeless that shall not come: "but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it."

It is an object worthy of the government of every state, to check a spirit of monopoly and forestalling, which, if permitted with impunity, may produce such serious consequences as threaten the very authority which connives at it. What distressing commotions hath it of late produced in a number of our large cities, which, in some places, have not been quelled without blood? It is a common saying, That hunger will break through stone walls; and indeed, all the ordinary restraints of judicial authority are before it but like green withes, or flaxen cords before the consuming flame. While the goodness of our heaven-

ly Father, in the prospects presented by the fruits of the earth, promised to rescue us from the jaws of famine, into which the unnatural bickerings of the nations, and the merciless avarice of individuals, had threatned to throw us, he was pleased, for our farther chastisement and trial, to blast, in part, that fair prospect; while the clouds from above poured out, almost incessantly, their destructive contents upon the earth. Various are the arrows in his quiver; yet does he not stir up all his wrath at once, nor strike without giving previous warning. How much we lie at his mercy, every revolving seed-time and harvest may fully evince: for should he with-hold the rains and dews of heaven in their season, or give these in the excess, how fatal both to man and beast might be the consequence? With this we are just now threatned†, and if the Lord stay not his hand, and bind up the clouds, many will have cause to lament the effects.

Tho' I would be sorry to give just ground of offence to any, yet I cannot overlook in this connection, and you will bear with me while I mention it, That in the scarcity with which we are just now menaced, we ought to see and own the wishes we have been so often reputed to entertain, and the efforts we have been said to make, to famish a great and populous nation, at the very time they were struggling with a variety of other calamities, and also the guilt of such unchristian conduct. Was such a conduct worthy of a generous nation, such as ours hath been generally allowed to be? If any credit is due to what hath been so often, and so publickly and confidently asserted, did we not place much of our hopes of success, in the present unhappy and bloody contest, on the operation of this unhallowed scheme, which behoved to militate against the weaker sex, and even in offending children, more forcibly than against the man who had arms in his hands, and was called forth to oppose us in the hostile field? Are the laws of God such an iron sinew to individuals, as will not bend either to their prejudices or passions; but, in respect of communities, such a nose of wax, as they may form and fashion at their pleasure? "If thine enemy hunger," saith the great Law-giver, "feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head," not sure to consume him, but to melt down his enmity, and conciliate his heart. For this benign purpose it is added, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." This would go farther to banish hostilities from the earth, than all the prowess of armed legions, or the wisdom of courts and cabinets, and would be doubtless more

† When these discourses were delivered from the pulpit, every thing promised a plentiful harvest; but by the time they were transcribing for the press, the face of things wore a very different aspect.

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worthy of the Christian name, and more consonant to the Christian hope. "Thou shalt love thine enemy" is a scripture precept, and will any one venture to say, that the way to express and testify this love, is to deprive him of the means of existence, if in our power, and consequently of existence itself? The sixth precept of the moral law, "Thou shalt not kill," condemns, as a breach of it, whatever has a tendency to deprive our fellow creature of life, as well as the direct act. To say that, tho' this and other precepts are binding upon all as individuals, they have no obligation at all on these individuals in their collective capacity, seems not a little Jesuitical. This, however, is the species of morality some would inculcate, and by which they would attempt to vindicate deeds in nations, that would be execrated, and severely punished in individuals. Wicked deeds lose nothing of their turpitude or guilt by being patronized by numbers, tho' these may brave it out here, and remain proof to shame or conviction; and the arguments by which they are often defended, must shrink before the touch of sound reason, and shall have no weight at the impartial bar of God, where those who compose large communities must appear in their individual capacity, and receive according to the deeds done in the body; and where also such as now join hand in hand to perpetrate mischief and wrong, shall not be unpunished. Excuse these remarks, which apply in many cases; for the circumstance that suggested them hath engaged the attention, and excited the regret of not a few.

It affords a sad symptom of our deep degeneracy, and a foreboding presage of our impending ruin, that many will not hear what God speaks to them from his word, unless it happen to coincide with their own private views and opinions; nay, instead of hearing it, they are irritated, and open their mouth, perhaps, in invectives against those who bring these unwelcome truths to their ears. But, let such look up to the collected clouds, listen to the descending rains, and cast their eyes abroad on the fields, where much of the food of man and beast lies still exposed, and in danger of perishing, and then say if God be not wroth with us for our iniquities. They who will not hear his word, must feel his rod, and should they continue obstinate under both, they shall be destroyed, and that without remedy. Let not any be mockers at the seasonable warnings of divine truth, which the events of providence loudly inculcate; nor reject them, as if no way concerned in them, lest their bands be made strong, the things that belong to their peace be hid from their eyes, or their destruction overtake them sudden and irresistible as a whirlwind.

I shall just point out another judgment, in the way of which

we in this nation are now called to wait for the great Lord of all—I mean the dreadful judgment of War, and the consequences resulting from it. Whether the war in which we are now unhappily engaged be just or unjust, necessary or unnecessary, I take not upon me at the time to say, whatever be my private sentiments on the subject. The time is short till all parties concerned shall stand at the enlightened and impartial tribunal of the great Judge of quick and dead, who seeth not as man seeth. There all the reasons and motives of commencing, and continuing it hitherto, shall be weighed in an equal balance, and both parties may promise themselves ample justice—God grant it be not justice without mercy! I am authorised to assert, however, that this war is, in one view, both just and necessary, God himself being judge;—just as a mean of punishing both us and our enemies, because both we and they have greatly offended him;—and necessary, to accomplish some important designs in his providence: for “surely the wrath of man shall praise him; the remainder of wrath shall he restrain,”—all that is not conducive to this grand purpose. Suffice it at present to say, that it is a heavy scourge or judgment from the Lord, who has doubtless a righteous hand therein, not only on our enemies, but also upon ourselves. Howsoever we may happen to differ in other things, for this is a period of division in sentiment, in this, I am persuaded, we are all agreed.

That war is an awful judgment, and indeed, the parent of many other grievous judgments, appears from its very nature, and also from the sacred oracles; whence states should never have recourse to it, but upon the most urgent and unavoidable necessity. When David sinned in numbering the people, from a principle reprobated by Heaven, he had his choice of three years famine, three months unsuccessful war, or three days pestilence, which last he preferred as most eligible: “I am in a great strait, says he: let me fall now into the hand of the Lord; for very great are his mercies, but let me not fall into the hand of man. So the Lord sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men.” This dreadful destroyer, having received commission from above, cut off such a vast number of the people in the space of a few hours, whence we may infer the extent of its execution in three days, if so long employed; and yet the distressed and penitent warrior preferred it to either of the other two, which shews plainly in what light he viewed war. It is not my purpose to describe the horrors and calamities which attend this grievous judgment, tho’ I were equal to the task. “Every battle of the warrior,” saith the prophet, “is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood;” and often, as he adds, “with burning and fuel of fire.”

Imagine to yourselves two hostile armies, consisting of many

thousands in the prime of life, all the offspring of one common Parent, few if any of whom had ever seen each other in the face, and consequently could have no ground for personal animosity or resentment. Imagine also that you saw them marching in dread array with waving banners, to meet each other, bent on mutual destruction, and armed with all the horrid apparatus of death—that you saw them actually engage, heard the dreadful and repeated roar of artillery, mowing down entire ranks at each discharge; heard the doleful shrieks of the wounded and dying, drowned only by the confused noise of battle, or the shouts of the victorious. Suppose you saw thousands of fellow mortals, stretched on the hostile plain, their mangled limbs covered with gore, trodden under the feet of horse and men, some in the agonies of death, without a friend to close their swimming eyes; others still possessed of the poor remains of life, doomed perhaps, to survive the general carnage, and drag with them a wounded, or maimed body to the grave! How long, ye Butchers of the human race, will ye continue the infernal traffic—continue to drink the blood, and devour the flesh of your fellow creatures? Are you not moved, to reflect on the irreparable loss occasioned to your country by such scenes, and especially to unknown myriads of surviving relatives, now abandoned to sorrow and to indigence? Where is the prince on earth that would not resent the demolition or abuse of his lifeless statue, which might be easily repaired? How shall God then bear the destruction of so many thousands of his living images, where this could by any means be prevented?

In the gloomy train of war we trace fruitful fields and vineyards laid waste—towns and villages consumed with fire—large cities bombarded, or taken by storm—their stately structures, the pride of art, the boast of ages, and the admiration of strangers, left a mighty pile of smoking ruins—private dwellings demolished, perhaps made the common grave of those who long lived in ease and elegance under their friendly roof,—famine raging, fear and paleness in every countenance—the cries and lamentations of defenceless women, and helpless children—streets filled with rubbish, and strewed with the slain—the blooming maid, and the venerable matron exposed to the rude assaults of an infuriated and unbridled soldiery,—while the innocent smile of the lovely babe can scarce excite pity, or secure protection, from men inured to blood and slaughter. Amidst the horrid scenes of war neither persons nor property are often respected. The hoary head commands no reverence, and the charms of youth and beauty but serve to render the lovely virgin, and the lately wedded spouse, a more likely prey

to the armed russians, where that system hath not been somewhat humanized.

Such are a few of the dire fruits of war, so worthy of its origin, the lusts of men that war in their members. Is it surprising then, the Spirit of God should characterize wicked men, and such as find their gratification in these horrid scenes, wolves, leopards and lions, asps and cockatrices; the one the most malignant of the serpentine brood, and the other the most ferocious of the beasts of prey? No wonder the royal Psalmist should thus express himself respecting them, " Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him. Rebuke the company of spear-men, the multitude of the bulls: scatter thou the people that delight in war," war which, like a storm of hail, mingled with blood, and fire, and vapours of smoke, scatters arrows, fire-brands and death. Would to Heaven that the above hints, respecting war, in general, were the mere fictions of a heated imagination! but, alas! how often have they been realized, and indeed, far exceeded, and that too even of late in certain instances.

The unhappy consequences of the disgraceful and disastrous contest, in which we are now embarked, are neither few, nor small, nor of short duration. What inroads and ravages hath it made on trade and commerce, which will not be soon or easily repaired, and, in consequence of which, many, prior to the commencement of hostilities, blessed with competence, were reduced to the dire necessity of bartering their liberty in support of the system that occasioned their ruin! Should trade and commerce perish, all descriptions of men must feel the consequence, but especially the lower classes, whose very subsistence depends on their prosperity. Little do many consider what myriads of families suffer, by reason of public measures; and what a source of misery they are to the unhappy men, who have exchanged of late their honest callings, and the comforts of their private dwelling, for all the hardships and dangers attendant on the destructive art of war. This system, in its offensive operations, and the resources necessary to maintain and prosecute them, treats the poor, in every nation where it prevails, to use the language of an apostle, "as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed."

A vast increase of the national debt, previously an enormous load, is another bitter fruit of that fatal tree, which we are now attempting to plant and fence, by the vigorous exertions of national power, and to water from the fountain of legislative authority. The war system is, in general, a tree of death, planted amidst streams of human blood, and fattened by carcases of human kind, thrown in heaps upon heaps around its

widely extended roots; while its spreading boughs seldom bear the salutary fruits of righteousness, freedom and philanthropy. Nay, do not millions feel that the native fruits of this accursed tree are tyranny and oppression, bloodshed, murder and devastation, in fine, an aggregate of human miseries? The accumulation of millions upon millions, till the load becomes too ponderous to be borne, is a serious mischief, that threatens many woes, and amongst others, the destruction of its parent system; for the time will come, perhaps, is not far distant, when it shall perish under its own weight. Similar causes produce like effects, which offer a seasonable admonition, too seldom however attended to. When the flood of corruption, prodigality and extravagance rose to a certain height in a neighbouring nation, whose resources must be owned to have been great, He that governs among the nations said, Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, and here shall all thy encroaching waves be stayed, the awful consequence of which you all know. High authority hath told us†, that the people in these lands are already under a heavy burden, to which however, some addition must be made, and a very little weight becomes an intolerable load when attached to a burden? Would we count that merchant wife and honest, or his affairs in a respectable state, the utmost stretch of whose exertions and property was scarce adequate to the interest of the sums already borrowed, yet was daily contracting new and vast debts, wherever ignorance, or confidence might dispose to lend? Suppose not this observation foreign to our subject; for common prudence and discernment must see in such a system, the certain seeds of dissolution, and it proves a grievous judgment wherever it prevails. Were the hundredth part of the sums lavished on destructive or foolish wars, wisely laid out in encouraging trade and commerce,—in promoting agriculture, and the improvement of waste lands—in educating youth, and improving the morals of the people,—in extending the blessings of arts, science and true religion to remote regions, the habitations of ignorance, barbarism and cruelty, and in relieving the real necessities of the poor and indigent at home, to all which purposes it might be adequate, how honourable to Britain the expenditure! how happy to mankind its fruits! But the ground of the accumulation of our vast and rapidly increasing national debt, hath given too much cause to the other nations of Europe, I might add, to millions in distant and remote regions, to form the wish that our sea-girt isle had been long since overwhelmed by its surrounding rampart, and sunk to the bottom of the ocean, thus cut off from all future power of scattering arrows,

† The King's Speech at the opening of Parliament.

fire brands and death amongst the noblest works of God here below.

Waving the prevailing discontent, the diversity of opinion, and animosity consequent on the present war, and the high price of provisions, and threatened scarcity, adverted to in preceding parts of the subject, all which must be owned to be a judgment on any land where they prevail; I would direct your attention to the dreaded aggrandizement of a nation, so often characterized "our natural foe," as a native consequence of present hostilities, and a circumstance fraught with serious prospects to these lands. The preservation of the balance of power hath been often urged as a just plea for entering into war; but hereby that balance is destroyed, principally by our own interference, and our enemies raised in the scale of political existence, in proportion as our nation is like to be depressed. Had it not been the combination formed against them, they had probably never acquired such extent of territory, and such powerful influence in the events of peace and war, in which they are now the sole dictators, for which their enemies have themselves wholly to thank. Should they prove "our natural foe," under their present form of government, and with their present acquisitions, lamentable to this nation must be the consequences, notwithstanding all our boasted resources. At any rate, our plans of commerce, in consequence of such aggrandizement, must be greatly deranged, the wonted channels of our trade obstructed, and the streams of our national wealth, and public prosperity, either dried up, or diverted from their usual course;—a serious prospect, under the rapid increase of public burdens. The loss thence arising to the nation must be incalculable, unless kind Providence interpose, and open up new sources of national wealth and prosperity. Have we not also lost much of our political consequence, by the measures we have of late pursued? The time hath been when Britain was looked up to as an umpire, by neighbouring nations, her mediations sought, her judgment and decisions acquiesced in as an oracle, and her alliance prized and solicited. But now, those that were attached to us by the faith of treaties, and the ties of gratitude, for ample benefits received, desert and abandon us, one after another, as if infected with a pest, each negotiating for himself, the best way he can, and leaving us to struggle as principal in a cause, to which we acceded only as an auxiliary, at least ostensibly. In this respect too we ourselves are strangely divided, the centre of authority, in one character, taking part with our treacherous and ungrateful Allies, and copying their example, and, in another, acting in direct opposition to that pacific system. We are told by high authority,

That a kingdom divided against itself is brought into desolation, and is not the danger of this increased, when the division pervades not only the body politic, but hath reached the head also, and shews itself in acts which he that runs may read? Permit me also to add, is there no reason to fear, that those who stand longest out in the quarrel, and are latest in offering, or acceding to proposals of peace, shall be obliged, if not victorious, of which there is little probability in the present case, to submit to more mortifying terms, than those obtained who embraced a more early opportunity of withdrawing from the unequal contest? Have we nothing to apprehend, respecting the safety of our foreign dependencies, from the continuation of a quarrel, hitherto so disastrous? Should the result prove a farther dismemberment of our dominion, must not this be deeply felt by the community at large, as well as by individuals, who will thus be stripped of their personal property? Indeed, it would be just in a righteous God, to realize all this, because we have long sanctioned, and mean still to maintain, in these foreign dependencies, a system of injustice and cruel oppression, against which the wrath of God is revealed from heaven; and that such will be the probable consequence, the speaker hath long since seen reason, from the most mature reflection on the word and wonted procedure of God, to draw the unwelcome conclusion. The speedy termination of a war which, if not unjust in its principle, is at least impracticable as to its object, an object that hath so often shifted ground, is the only measure that can furnish material relief under so many pressing evils, especially from the urgent calamity of famine with which these lands are still threatened.

And what a serious thought, to reflect upon so many thousands sent prematurely to the grave,—cut down in the prime of life, and for ever separated from their connections and enjoyments on earth! It is somewhere recorded of a certain heathen prince; that viewing, from an eminence, his numerous army pass before him, he was seen to shed tears, and being asked the reason, replied “How can I forbear weeping to reflect, that all these brave men will, in the course of so many years be cut off by death? Here however, his views terminated. But Christianity teaches to consider the matter in a much more serious light, and to view death as not only terminating our present state of existence, and all its enjoyments and hopes, but also as succeeded by an impartial judgment, which shall fix our condition unalterably for eternity. If in the course of this bloody war no fewer than ten hundred thousand men have fallen, one way or other in consequence of it, and some suppose

this to be within the real number; and if there be reason to fear the greater part of these were quite unprepared for the momentous change; O what an awful judgment! what guilt hath been contracted on one side or other! Each of these may be allowed to have had, at an average, ten or twelve near relatives and connections that would both feel and lament his death. With them, too, perished all that might descend from them, did they live to terminate their days in the ordinary course of nature. Nor are the miseries, and premature death, which war entails upon the brutal creation, particularly that useful animal the horse, to be overlooked in this connection; for he that regards the fall of a sparrow to the ground, cannot be indifferent to the miseries of any of his creatures. From what hath been advanced on this particular, you can easily infer, if candour is allowed to judge, that the war, in which our nation is at present unhappily engaged, is a calamity productive of indefinite evils, and as such to be deprecated and lamented.

Thus have I pointed out some of these judgments, both spiritual and temporal, with which these lands are now visited, and in the way of which we are called to wait for the Lord, who, in effect, addresses us in and by them, Prepare thyself to meet thy God, O Britain. I have insisted the longer upon these, because cursory reflexions upon such topics seldom fix the attention, and impress the heart. Some may perhaps think, that many of the observations might have been spared, and I should think so too, did they not, in one view or other, affect our case in the sight of God, indeed, much more deeply than many seem to be aware of; and what engages his attention, and influences his administration, which often effects the most important changes, by means and incidents, which men count trivial and uninteresting, needs no apology for suggesting it to the consideration of professing Christians. Not a single sentiment hath been wantonly thrown out, with a view to insult, or irritate any, but from a conviction of its seasonableness and importance in the present alarming crisis of our public affairs—Tho' I have adverted to our evil day, and some of the clouds of wrath that overcast it, yet, Heaven knows how far I have been from desiring it,—how often I have deprecated it in prospect, and lamented, from the bottom of my heart, the increasing probability of its near approach and fearful gloom. I tarry not to improve this interesting part of the subject, which must be left, and is recommended to every one's own private reflexions and meditations.

Only permit me to ask, How stand you affected under the judgments of the Almighty? Do they produce the effects to which your attention was directed in the first discourse? Can you say, with the Church, "Yea, in the way of thy judgments,

O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee." With our soul have we desired thee in the night, the gloomy night of adversity; yea, with our spirit within us will we seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, we have been exercised by them to learn righteousness? Do you feel and lament spiritual judgments, as the most grievous of all, however little regarded by the men of the world? Do you see and acknowledge the hand of God in these temporal calamities where-with we are now visited, and still farther threatened, on account of our sins? Do you seek and expect deliverance from God alone, and wait for him, by a patient continuance in well doing, for this purpose? Is it in that city, to which God hath appointed salvation for walls and bulwarks, that you seek chambers of safety, wherein to hide yourselves "as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast?" Or do ye rely like too many, on other means of safety, in the day of the Lord's fierce anger, and look to a very different art for deliverance!

The real Christian, when he apprehends danger, or feels harm, attempts, like the alarmed bird, to seek his safety, by soaring aloft to Heaven, on the wings of faith, prayer and hope: but the men of the world, in such situations, like the worm that feels the tread of the passenger, shrink to the earth for protection, or seek shelter and comfort under some temporary gourd of their own rearing. These see not God's hand when lifted up, regard not its operations, nor wisely consider his doings; whence he threatens to destroy them, and not build them up. By such a conduct, they are guilty of despising his chastening, and so procure to themselves many sorrows—stripe upon stripe, till they are either destroyed or consumed. It concerns us much to learn our real state and character before God, which our frame of mind and exercise in the view of, and under his judgments, may serve to ascertain. Without some well-founded hope, that he is our reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, we may look upon every present calamity as, to us, a pledge and earnest of an eternal judgment; but such hope is amidst the wintry storms of life, "as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, entering into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec." That the Lord's judgments on this nation, in the present day, are not without a cause—that we have reason to dread their continuance or increase, in one form or other, if repentance prevent not, will appear from a slight attention to some of our prevailing sins, which we have ground to apprehend are the procuring cause of these judgments. To point out these will form the subject of another discourse.

SERMON IV.

SINS WHICH HAVE PROCURED THE JUDGMENTS OF HEAVEN.

ISAIAH XXVI. 8.

YEA, IN THE WAY OF THY JUDGMENTS, O LORD, HAVE WE
WAITED FOR THEE.

IN the preceding discourses, the exercise specified in the text was unfolded—Some of its special advantages pointed out—and our attention was also directed to several of these judgments, in the way of which we are called, as professing Christians, and are indeed, indispensably bound, to wait for the great Lord of heaven and earth, who thus meets us in the habitation of his providence. You will recollect, that in the last discourse from the subject, various judgments, both of a temporal and spiritual nature, were adverted to, as at present inflicted on our nation, and demanding, in the name of justly incensed Heaven, the serious attention, and due improvement of all descriptions of men. And is our Land visited with the judgments to which our attention hath been directed, and similar ones, and is there not a cause? Yes, Brethren, in abounding sins of various kinds, and deepest die, we may trace the fatal cause; for while righteousness exalteth a nation, sin is the reproach, and, perfisted in, insures the ruin of any people.

It therefore remains, I should now proceed in the Last place, as proposed, to point out, or animadver on some of these sins, with which we are chargeable, as a community, in the sight of God, or which are well known to prevail among us, and may be justly regarded as the procuring causes of such heavy judgments, under the righteous administration of the Almighty; and, if still perfisted in, must doubtless expose to calamities still more intolerable. Tho' to trace, and animadver on, the sins of a people, is a very unpleasant task to a humane and feeling mind, of the difficulties attending which I am well aware; yet being both seasonable and necessary, in present cir-

cumstances, to vindicate the ways of God towards us, and lead to their proper improvements, it may become, thro' his blessing, higly beneficial. This is, moreover, an indispensable duty in those who are placed as watchmen on Zion's towers, and should they pass over in silence what the Lord is doing in his providence, and saying in his word, against the ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, they act unworthy of their character and office, and betray the trust reposed in them, to their own confusion, in the day when the Lord will require an account of their stewardship, and of the talents given them to occupy till he come. Much better incur the censures of fallible men, by a faithful declaration of the truth, in exposing and reproving vice, wherever found, and admonishing plainly of the penal consequences; than by concealing, disguising, or palliating the matter, provoke God, and endanger our own salvation. The ministers of Christ must not act like a timid or unfaithful envoy, who is more afraid of offending the court to which he is sent, than that which sends him. Such conduct may be termed prudence among men, but it is detestable in the sight of God.

To form a proper opinion of the character and prospects of any nation, and of the aggravations which attend their sinful courses, it is necessary to advert to their civil and religious advantages, the deliverances wrought for them in providence, and the returns which they have made. Weighing things in the balance of reason and of the sanctuary, it is feared, that our national guilt will be found, upon impartial inquiry, more aggravated, in all these respects, than that of any nation under heaven. Should sins of a scarlet and crimson die be persisted in, amidst the light of sacred truth—be openly avowed, and practised, after many solemn warnings and admonitions of their guilt and dangerous consequences, and that too, while God is pleading a controversy, by these very judgments, which they procured; say, Brethren, if it is not time for his servants, in obedience to his command to the prophet Jonah, to arise, and cry against such conduct, wherever it is manifest; for its wickedness must be gone up before him—time to preach the preaching that he bids them, even to cry aloud, as another prophet is charged, and not spare; to lift up their voice like a trumpet, and shew his people their transgressions, and all open offenders their sins? Wherever the inspired writers denounce the judgments of God against particular sins, and sinners, even the ordinary teachers of Christianity are authorized to apply such denunciations to similar sins and transgressors; for they cannot err in thus applying what hath been recorded for their use, and for the instruction, reproof, and correction in righteousness, of mankind in every age. These holy men of God,

acting under the immediate direction of his Spirit, afford the best pattern for imitation. It merits remark, that when God is enumerating the sins of ancient Israel, he does not say, shall not my soul be avenged on this nation, but on such a nation as this? plainly intimating, that every people who resemble them in guilt, are included in the threatenings originally denounced against them.

In the writings of the prophets, and apostles, and also in the discourses of our Lord, his servants are provided with the artillery of Heaven, and their business is to point it aright,—to declare the whole counsel of God, whether men will hear or forbear, leaving consequences to him that sent them. If such be the charge of God to his servants, in every age, and, perhaps, more especially in the present day; and if such their duty, in consequence of this charge; then, to such as would censure this freedom as unbecoming the pulpit, and interfering with things too high for them, may they reply, with the apostles, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.” No rank, wealth, or titles can claim exemption, if found connected with the violations of the divine law, and contempt or neglect of the ordinances of the gospel; for the more exalted the station, and the more extensive its influence, the greater the guilt, and the more fatal the consequences of such a conduct. Some would justify themselves for neglecting this duty, or condemn the discharge of it in others, when that respects certain classes in society, or certain measures, by alleging, that these are state matters, or matters of mere human politics, which, according to them, lie quite out of the road of a gospel minister, in the discharge of his public function. If the matters in question be of such a nature as to be offensive to God, contrary to the dictates of his word, repugnant to the spirit and genius of the gospel, and subversive of the great interests of Christianity in the world; then a minister of the God of truth not only may, but is in duty bound to animadvert plainly upon them; yea, to lift up his voice like a trumpet, in remonstrating, and denouncing his threatened wrath against them, whatever construction his fellow men may put on his conduct, counting it a small thing in such cases to be judged of their judgment. But, where none of the above things are concerned, he forgets his place, and mistakes the duties of his office, should he take it upon him in the least to interfere. To draw the line in such cases, the word of truth, and the example of its sacred penmen, are profitable, yea, sufficient to direct.

So far from finding pleasure in descanting upon our public vices, most gladly would I represent the aggregate inhabitants of

our common country as a righteous nation, which keepeth the truth, and hath not swerved from the commandments and institutions of their God, was there any room for such a favourable representation. We ought, however, to remark with pleasure, that while iniquity aboundeth, and the love of many waxeth cold—that degenerate and wicked as we are, alas! in general, grown, some favourable symptoms appear in our melancholy case, which, if the Lord will, may serve to ward off the deserved and impending blow, and to lengthen out our tranquility—some promising circumstances, that may weigh with merciful Heaven, in the day of visitation, to suspend or mitigate our merited doom. There are yet many in our land who fear the Lord, and lament the increasing prevalence of abounding iniquity. How far he may hear their cry in behalf of a sinful nation, none can pretend to say; they are not yet, however, forbidden to pray for her prosperity; at any rate, their own soul will be given them for a prey, and they shall certainly be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. Some endeavours are also using to promote this serious concern at home, and to spread the blessings of the everlasting gospel to distant regions; which, originating from a cordial desire for the coming and extension of Messiah's kingdom in the world, will not fail of acceptance with him, who beholds the upright, and all their benevolent schemes for his glory, with a pleasant countenance. It is agreeable to reflect, that so many worthy Christians, and these too, of different denominations, should have cordially embarked, and made such laudable exertions in a scheme so generous and disinterested, as that of sending the means of Christian knowledge to the poor remote Heathen. This claims grateful thanks to God, who inspires the human heart with such noble benevolence; and bespeaks, it is to be hoped, some good to the nation with whom the plan originates. Such pure and disinterested charity to the precious souls of myriads of fellow men, who now sit in the dark region of the shadow of death, will, we would humbly trust, cover, in the day of visitation, a multitude of sins. To the success of such pious efforts should every Christian contribute by his prayers, and, as circumstances may admit, by his property, deeming it a privilege thus to honour God with part of his substance†.

† The author refers to a meeting of Clergy and Laity which was held in London on the 22, 23 and 24 of September last, with the generous design specified above, when 200 Clergymen of different denominations, and a vast multitude of people attended. A Society was formed for sending Missionaries to evangelize the Heathen nations; subscriptions were opened for this purpose, and in the course of a fortnight, L. 700 annually, and L. 2700 of donations were subscribed; seven young men offered themselves to go as Missionaries; the Society are to purchase a ship of their own; and a Gentleman who made a fortune in sailing to the South seas, has offered to navigate their vessel gratis.

The more wealthy part of the community have also, of late years, shewed many instances of liberality, in relieving the necessities of their poor and indigent brethren, during the inclement season; which have caused the hearts of many orphans and widows to sing for joy. These acts of well-timed charity claim the gratitude of the poor, and should not be permitted to pass unnoticed, or without their due tribute of praise. How far this may contribute to lengthen out our tranquility at home, notwithstanding our awful guilt and many foreboding appearances, who can tell? for "blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." Some possess wisdom to discern the truth as in Jesus, and have obtained mercy to be faithful in declaring it, and warning and beseeching men to be reconciled to God, to attend to, and improve the signs of the times, and seek shelter from present and future wrath under the covert of Messiah's blood and righteousness. Tho' it is the manner of too many, to forsake the assembling of themselves together, for the purpose of religious worship on the Lord's day; and of others, to content themselves with a very partial attendance; yet a respectable proportion of the community still shew a decent regard to the externals of religion, while not a few Christians, of different denominations, manifest, by their conduct, that they feel its power and sacred influence on their hearts. May kind Heaven, with whom is the residue of the Spirit, increase the number of these true friends of their country and of man! Among the higher ranks in life, some respectable characters are to be still found, who are exemplary for many things pious, virtuous and praise-worthy. These furnish bright examples of genuine Christianity, and are not ashamed of the name and faith of Jesus amidst an evil and adulterous generation. While these few venerable characters lend the influence of their rank and station to religion, it reflects an honour upon them in return, which neither rank nor wealth, of themselves, can procure, nor the favour of the greatest of mortals impart. Does it not also afford ground of thankfulness and hope, that the Lord is still raising up, in different religious connections, some faithful ministers—some vigilant watchmen on Zion's walls, in whose mouth the trumpet gives neither a doubtful nor ambiguous sound. While those who decline to plead the cause of God, and testify against abounding sins, may be left to feel the smart of the judgments these sins procure, perhaps among the first who suffer by them; such as seek and obtain mercy to be

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This may also prove the mean of introducing the arts of civilization among them, by which the state of human life is ameliorated. It is hoped Scotland will with the utmost cheerfulness contribute for so benevolent a purpose.

faithful, when fidelity exposes to reproach, misconstruction, and persecution, shall be hid in his pavilion in evil days, nor shall their faithful labours of love, tho' traduced, despised, and rejected on earth, be in vain in the Lord, or overlooked by him in the presence of an assembled world. In addition to the above favourable circumstances, need I mention a disposition to honest industry, and a growing aversion to war, servitude, corruption and oppression? evils so inimical to human happiness, and so prevalent in the world, which virtuous and generous dispositions appear to be of late reviving. To these things I advert with pleasure, as bright traits in our national character, and some alleviation of our public guilt; to which some would add, our late extraordinary zeal against irreligion and atheism, and for the Christian faith and worship in the world; but as the motives of our conduct in this particular are at least suspicious, I forbear to mention it, as constituting any part of our public virtue—any defence against the judgments of Heaven that are abroad in the earth.

But, notwithstanding the alleviating circumstances mentioned above, and others that may occur to yourselves upon reflexion, our national sins, furnish a very copious theme, to which Heaven, in various ways, demands our serious attention. Did the Spirit of truth delineate the character of our nation as he hath done that of the Jews, can we suppose, wicked as we are taught to consider them, that the shades in the picture would be fewer, or the colouring less dark and strong? In the outlines of their character, as drawn by the pen of inspiration, we may see, as in a glass, too striking features of our own. It also presents a vindication of the divine severity, in the awful judgments inflicted on that people, some of which are referred to in the text, and, besides, a pledge and earnest of what we have reason to dread, should we still copy the fatal example, or rather, exceed the hateful pattern they have set us. It may therefore, be of some service to turn our thoughts for a moment to that gloomy portrait, in which we are sure, the dark colours are not overcharged, before we proceed to the too obvious counterpart in our own conduct.

The great outlines in the draught given us of the iniquities of the Jewish nation, by their own prophets, as every one must know, who is in the least acquainted with their writings, are injustice,—oppression,—opposition to, and rejection of the truth—inattention to the hand of God when lifted up in their afflictions, and incorrigible obduracy under it—brutish ignorance of his ways and judgments, and of the ends he meant to serve by them—an obstinate resistance of divine authority—the open and frequent breach of conjugal fidelity--arrogant falsehood against the Lord himself, or a gross misrepresentation

of his word and ways---idolatry, so long the sin that more easily beset them, and, in their case, avowed treason against Heaven---base ingratitude under the receipt of great and numerous mercies and deliverances---deceit and treachery---emulous superiority in almost every species of iniquity---cruelty towards those that were in their power---a glorying in their peculiar privileges, and fancied rectitude of character, notwithstanding they were so destitute of the one, and had so shamefully abused the other---vile hypocrisy, and a fond attachment to false doctrine crowned the whole.

This last was by no means the least enormity in the black catalogue of their national sins. In point of real aggravation, and pernicious tendency, it yielded to none. A prevalent defection in religious principles proved, as indeed it ever will, the impure fountain which tainted their morals, and whence issued such poisonous streams as totally infected both the senate and the sanctuary, the civil, and the religious community. The leaders of both caused them to err, the people themselves loved to have it so, and hence they came to be at length involved in one common ruin; for never did any harden themselves against God, and prosper. So universal was their depravity of manners, that king, princes, priests and people; yea, the whole kingdom, comprehending all ranks, classes, degrees, and descriptions of men, were up in arms against the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth; and the result shewed the extreme danger of thus rushing on the thick bosses of his buckler. The temple became a den of thieves; the palace a focus or centre of impiety, if not of impurity; the Sanhedrim, or grand council of the nation, a nest of vile idolaters and practical atheists, as appears from the eighth of Ezekiel's prophecy; and Jerusalem the mother city, with all the cities of Judah, combined, as it were, in rebellion against the God of Israel, and partook of the general infection.

Their princes are charged as being rebellious, and companions of thieves,---rebellious, if not against the state, at least against God---companions of thieves, not surely of vulgar thieves, of house-breakers, or street, or high-way robbers, but, probably, of the thieves, the wafters of the public money; for while these, in their place, oppressed the community with heavy burdens, or taxes, they appropriated to themselves, and their friends, much of the public revenue, that passed thro' their hands; and the princes were ready to connive at all this, for the sake of dividing the spoil, and expending it upon their lusts: for with these public thieves and robbers they became associates in iniquity, and were seen, perhaps, more frequently with them in the tavern and brothel than in the sanctuary of the living God.

Throughout all the prophets, we find the heaviest charges against that nation, and their great men, accompanied with awful threatenings of certain judgments, which were actually executed in their season. But you will find a summary of these in the first chapter of this book, whereof our text makes a part, and in the second chapter of the prophecy of Jeremiah. They were rebellious children—more stupid and ungrateful than the ox and ass;—“ they were a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that were corrupters; they forsook the Lord, and provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger.” Instead of growing better, they went backward, and revolted more and more, under the corrections of the Almighty. So great was their wickedness, that the prophet addresses them, “ Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom: give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah;” for which offensive language, the Jewish writers tell us, that he was at length put to an excruciating death. He charges their once faithful city Jerusalem as become an harlot, and as full, not of judgment and righteousness, as formerly, but of murderers. He brands her princes, her nobles and great men as rebels and companions of thieves; and tells us, that every one loved gifts, and fought after rewards: that they judged not the fatherless, neither did the cause of the widow come unto them. “ As with the people, so was it with the priests; as with the servant, so with his master, &c.” Many were carried away by the error of the wicked, and that wonderful and horrible thing was committed in the land: “ The prophets prophesied falsely, and the priests bare rule by their means; and the people loved to have it so.” Ezekiel, or rather God by him, gives us, in the twenty-second chapter of his prophecy, a catalogue of the crimes of Judah and Jerusalem, and certain messages of wrath, which he was commissioned to denounce against them. Among other things, he charges them with having despised his holy things, and profaned his sabbaths; charges their prophets with a confederacy; their priests with violating his law, profaning his holy things; with putting no difference between the holy and profane, between the unclean and the clean; and also with daubing the people with untempered mortar, or false doctrine; and with seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, “ saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken.” The mournful description is closed with this memorable declaration, as expressive of the divine procedure towards them; “ Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them, I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God.” These inspired strictures on ancient Israel merit our attention and regard; for in them, I fear, we may trace our own charac-

ter, and read our impending doom; and indeed, except we repent, we shall in like manner perish. With them, there were many exceptions from the general profligacy of manners; but their number was so inconsiderable, compared to the whole nation, that Isaiah stiles them "a very small remnant." In the day of visitation, that remnant could not ward off the so often threatened wrath of Heaven; and tho' we too, can plead many exceptions from the general corruptions; yet, let that consideration lead us to entertain a godly jealousy, and to mix trembling with our mirth and confidence.

Having premised a few thoughts respecting the duty of exposing and reproving sin wherever it appears,—also adverted to some favourable circumstances still existing in our case, and to the character of the Jewish nation, whose history presents a solemn admonition to every other under heaven, and to whose character, even in their very worst period, our own bears too striking a resemblance; I go on now to point out some of the sins which we have every reason to fear are the mean or cause of procuring such judgments, as have been specified in a preceding part of the subject, and may expose to still worse if not speedily broken off by repentance. In animadverting on these, I beg to be indulged that plainness, candor and simplicity which become a messenger of the God of truth, when speaking in his name, in whose august presence we are now assembled, and before whose impartial bar we must all in a little appear. But who is sufficient to describe a subject so extensive and diversified? The most cursory survey of our prevailing and aggravated sins would far exceed the bounds of one discourse. It is however, the more necessary to be a little particular on those adverted to, as mere cursory or superficial remarks on any topic, especially where the mind may be blinded by prejudice, the moral feeling blunted by custom, or the passions bribed by inclination, seldom if ever carry conviction.

The first of these to which I would direct your attention, is our vile ingratitude to the great Author of our being, and of all our mercies, which is, indeed, none of the least of our sins. These mercies are so many, "they cannot be reckoned up in order: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." Hath he not nourished, and brought us up as children? and yet, must we not confess, that we have rebelled against him? Too justly may he address us, "As a son honoureth his father, and a servant his master; if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?" If the crime of ingratitude is deemed so base and detestable, even when it hath only an earthly benefactor for its object, and benefits of small value to ascertain its turpitude, as to render the man branded with it

odious in society: what must it be when directed against that infinitely good and gracious Being, from whom we derive our existence, and all our comforts; and upon whom depend all our future hopes and prospects? Every sin we commit is fraught with ingratitude against God, as well as with treason and rebellion; and, oh! with what ingratitude are we all chargeable in his sight, especially for his unspeakable gift Christ Jesus?

As a nation, he hath done many great and wonderful things for us, which it is not now my purpose so much as to mention. Long hath he acted the kind part of our Guardian and protector, and often wrought seasonable deliverance in our behalf. What Moses said to the redeemed Hebrews applies with great propriety to the inhabitants of our long and highly favoured Isle: "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!" Can we say, that as a nation we have been careful to make suitable returns? Alas! numberless glaring facts daily attest the contrary. Our ingratitude to our heavenly Benefactor hath borne proportion to the number, and the value of our privileges. Because we have not duly prized, nor properly improved our civil and religious advantages, it is just with God to leave us to feel their value, and learn their importance by their abridgement or loss. Not more culpable, in this respect, was ancient Israel, in the days of our prophet, when God summoned heaven and earth to testify against their base ingratitude: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Nay, must not the guilt of our ingratitude rise in proportion to our superior advantages? Shall not the Lord visit for this? yea, hath he not done it already? This odious temper is the parent and nurse of many others.

May not I venture to assert that Hypocrisy is another crying sin, which prevails in our day and nation, and intermingles itself with our civil intercourse, and religious observances? What extravagant and unmeaning compliments abound in the higher circles in life! What an interchange of professions of friendship and obligation, of readiness to oblige and serve, while both heart and conduct give the lie to the language of the lips on such occasions! Is not this sporting with truth and candor, and consequently acting unbecoming the character of real Christians, who are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile? Such unworthy conduct made an ancient prophet exclaim,

" Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of way-faring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them: for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth; for they proceed from evil to evil and they know not me, saith the Lord."

The want of truth and candor, in the civil intercourse, and, commercial transactions of life, however little regarded by many, is, no doubt, an evil offensive to God, and of pernicious tendency among men. He is a God of truth, abhors falsehood, and dissimulation, and requires that we should speak the truth every man to his neighbour. One essential part of the character of a citizen of Zion is, that he speaketh the truth in his heart, does not think one thing, and say another. When men, from whatever motives, can bend their tongues, like their bow, for lies, are they not lost to moral feeling and sense of character, as well as to the fear of God, which marks them ripe for his judgments? I before observed the want of truth and candor in the compliments that pass current in the social interviews of the fashionable world; but this vice is not confined to such circles, nor to matters of mere ceremony. It is to be feared, that in mercantile transactions, this detestable evil prevails, and is little thought of, on account of its frequency. And is there no reason to suspect, that the same vice insinuates itself into the concerns of the public—that truth is often disguised, concealed or misrepresented, where society have a claim to candor, and fair representation—also that what is evil in others is exaggerated, their best deeds concealed, or misrepresented, and things fathered upon them which they neither know nor acknowledge? This is invariably the case, where passion and prejudice find place, and where a party, or party measures are meant to be supported at all hazards.

These, and the like reasons, however, instead of justifying such freedoms with truth, only aggravate the guilt of such conduct, and render the consequences the more serious. The ninth precept of the moral law, while it prohibits bearing false witness against our neighbour, or whatever is prejudicial to truth, and injurious to our own, and his good name; enjoins the reverse, a care to maintain and promote truth in all our civil and religious concerns, and to vindicate the character and good name of our fellow men, as well as our own, carefully avoiding every thing of an opposite tendency. Jeremiah, in the passage referred to already, farther describes the odious vice of dissimulation and deceit, and cautions against its snares: "Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with flanders. And they will deceive every

one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity. Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit: thro' deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord. Their tongue is as an arrow shot out, it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth; but in his heart he layeth his wait. Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Human nature, all along corrupt and degenerate, still produces the same bitter fruits, by which many are not a little injured in their peace, comfort and reputation.

When the sword of persecution is sheathed, and the profession of religion calculated to secure respect and interest among men, there is great danger of hypocrisy and dissimulation in the things of God. Many will call Christ Lord, Lord, in the day of prosperity, follow him because they eat of the loaves and fishes, and are satisfied, who, should tribulation, or persecution for the word's sake arise, are offended, turn their back upon him, and walk no more with him. Is there no ground to fear, that God may say of us, as he did of the Jews, " This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me?" How many content themselves with the form of godliness, that deny its power,—with a name to live, while in fact they are dead, still dead in trespasses and sins!

As a nation, have we no reason to tax ourselves with this vice? Should we plead, Not guilty, glaring facts would prove us perverse. It is true, we still have our national religion, to which all ranks pay some compliment. We have also our public facts, on which we seem very devout, and can hang down the head like a bulrush. But, do we never, on these occasions, confess sins that we neither hate nor forsake? never profess to own dependance upon Heaven which we do not feel? Whatever it may be with individuals, as a Community, is there no reason to fear, that these are seasons of much hypocrisy and guilt, matters merely of course, to save appearances† before

† It is related, both by Mr Hume and Principal Robertson, in the history of Charles V, that this prince, having made the Pope his prisoner, issued a proclamation requiring public prayers to be offered up throughout his dominions, for the release of his Holiness, when his own word could effect this at pleasure. But this, it would seem, was intended to save appearances with the populace, whose religion taught them to venerate the Holy father as the head of the church, and the Vicar of Christ; and who durst call the Emperor's sincerity in question, when he was pleased to attest it, by the interposition of his absolute authority?

If I remember well, either one or both the authors mentioned above, also tell us, that vast pains were taken by the creatures of the crown of Spain, to persuade the people that the English were all incarnate devils, in order to excite them to co-operate in the formidable expedition of the Spanish Armada,

the world? The very language put into their mouth, on such occasions, is not that of the heart, but of office, not the language of a true Christian penitent, but of a proud Deist, who is determined to stand upon his terms with his Maker, and despairs to be indebted to a Mediator for introducing him with acceptance into the divine presence. Earthly princes have their officers in waiting, for such a purpose; and indeed, God is the only King in the universe whom mortals venture to approach alone, or without the intervention of any middle person. It is to be wished the above remarks were quite unfounded, but that they are not wholly so, the edicts enjoining the observance of public fasts, and the prayers prescribed upon such occasions, give reason to fear.

Can a God of infinite perfection be mocked, or imposed upon by specious appearances? Will his omniscient eye not penetrate that thin veil of hypocrisy, with which men too often disguise their real sentiments and ruling dispositions? As they sow now, he assures them, they shall hereafter reap. But what is the fast which the Lord hath chosen, and will, in its observance, accept? Why, you will find it described and exemplified in the 58th chapter of Isaiah's prophecy, and in the 3d of Jonah's, passages which are recommended to your deliberate perusal. Having viewed these, with care and attention, lay your hand upon your heart, and declare, if you can, as in the sight of God, if ever we have fasted as a nation after such a sort? By their fruits are we to learn the nature of such services; for so the Lord hath taught us, respecting both men and

which for a time threatened the very existence of this nation, and might have accomplished its ruin, had not Heaven seasonably interposed. When Britain sent an Ambassador to negotiate a peace, the people, credulous enough to believe what had been so often and zealously inculcated, flocked about him wherever he appeared, to see if he was like other men; and were not a little surprised to find, that, instead of resembling an incarnate fiend, as they were taught to believe, his appearance and deportment were gentle and humane.

The court of France too, adopted a similar policy, if any credit be due to what I recollect to have some where read, viz. that in the American war, in which we got possession of Canada, &c. the Roman catholic priests, instructed, no doubt, by those whose servile tools they always were, took great pains to persuade the Indians, that the English nation once put the son of God to death, and that he would never appear in the world, to bless mankind, and particularly the Indian tribes, till the whole of that devoted people were exterminated from the face of the earth. By means of this stratagem, and a price put on the scalps of our Countrymen, many of them were murdered in cold blood; and yet Britain can now expend her blood and treasure, to restore the odious system that gave birth to many such enormities, affording also a friendly asylum to the exiled priests of the courtly religion of Rome! Such are some of the infernal tricks, which statesmen and court parasites sometimes employ, to impose upon an ignorant and credulous populace, for their acquiescence is often necessary, when they have certain purposes to serve; even Herod was deterred for a time from murdering John the Baptist, thro' fear of the people; and these base and dark manoeuvres have not seldom been dignified with the specious title of profound politics.

measures. The continuance, in present circumstances, of the infernal traffic in Slaves, under the sanction of legal authority, and many other abominations, sufficiently prove the contrary; if God, speaking in the above passages, is allowed to determine. The joint edict of the people, the king and nobles of Nineveh appointing a fast contained, I fear, as much of Christianity, if not more of natural equity than those which are fabricated in modern times. They were taught, by the dictates even of nature's light, the absurdity of pretending to keep a fast, detached from real reformation of manners; which they appear to have considered as its very soul and essence, without which it would be but a lifeless and putrified carcase. They accordingly enjoined upon every person, not only to be covered with sackcloth, as expressive of deep debasement, amidst great distress, and to cry mightily to God; but also to "turn from his evil way, and from the violence that was in their hands." A cordial belief of the word of God, in the mouth of his servant, was the moving spring of their humiliation; for, instead of apprehending the prophet as a disturber of the peace, a seditious person that troubled them with false alarms, and unfounded charges of guilt, they "believed God" speaking by him, notwithstanding he was a foreigner of a homely appearance, one of that hated nation the Jews, "and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them even to the least of them;" for the people, the king and the nobles, all joined in the solemn service, convinced they were all on a level in the sight of God, and equally exposed to his wrath; and also united in the general reformation: whence, God bears them honourable testimony—"He saw their works, that they turned from their evil way," which is assigned as the reason of his not executing upon them the threatened vengeance.

When we proclaim a fast, is it because, like the Ninevites, we believe the threatenings of God's word, directed against such sins and sinners as prevail among us? Do we, like them, "from the greatest among us even to the least," lay aside every mark of pomp and luxury, lie low in dust before the Lord, and cry mightily unto him for pardon, and the averting of his wrath; turning, at the same time, every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands? Have our fasts been ever attended with a general order to break off every species of oppression and violence, in every part of our dominions, and been productive, in this respect, of universal reformation? I fear not; for they would find themselves greatly mistaken, who thought we ever fast as a nation after such a manner. Have we not been seen, at the very time public fasts were appointed, watering and guarding a tree of

slavery, so long since planted in our soil, whose bitter fruits have brought grievous oppression, accumulated miseries, and death itself, in diversified and terrible forms, upon countless myriads of our unoffending fellow men and brethren, the creatures and offspring of God, and the subjects of his universal kingdom; whence he deems himself bound, in honour and in justice, not to mention his word of promise, to redress their wrongs, and avenge himself upon their oppressors, except they speedily repent. By reason of the iniquitous system, referred to above, and other abounding evils, we cannot yet adopt, in respect of our nation, the language of the prophet, "The extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land."

And, if we may credit the accounts published to the world, thro' the channel of news-papers, which I do not recollect to have ever seen contradicted, instead of copying the laudable example of the rulers and nobles of Nineveh, some of ours devote such occasions to grand entertainments, and are humble enough before the close of the day, not with the spirit of piety but of wine!! But what does God say in respect of those who can riot in revellings and mirth, when he is calling them, in his providence, to uncommon humiliation for sin, or when they themselves enjoin this as a duty, and profess to be so exercised? You will find his declaration, by consulting the 22d of Isaiah, 12th verse, and downwards; "And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, till ye die, saith the Lord of hosts." These things considered, I must add, in the words of our Lord to the Jews, "The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here."

While public sin of any kind is retained---while a nation refuse to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke, the indispensable requisites in the fast that the Lord hath chosen, our observing a day to afflict our soul, our bowing down the head like a bulrush upon it, and spreading sackcloth and ashes under us, which the Jews were ready to call a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord, will serve only to aggravate our guilt, and accelerate our impending doom, as in the mournful case of that unhappy people; if we may credit the word of God, and make the history of his procedure, respecting them,

the rule of our judgment. Men may please themselves with such farcical services, but they prove not merely vain, and unavailing to ward off deserved judgments, but pernicious;---even a gross insult to Deity, as if he could be bribed, by a shew of piety, and a temporary external humiliation, in which the heart is little, if at all engaged, to commute matters with us, and connive at our continued indulgence of, perhaps, the worst passions of the heart, and the commission, it may be, of the blackest crimes. Other nations may exceed us in ignorance and infidelity, but few, perhaps, if any, can in hypocrisy, and double dealing with God in matters of eternal moment. Those only who forsake, as well as confess their sins, shall find mercy: but such as cover them shall not prosper.

What are the doctrines which are chiefly inculcated upon such occasions? Are they those of the meek and lowly Jesus, who came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them, and to give his own a ransom for many? at whose birth peace was, by angelic choirs, sung and announced on earth, and good-will to men. Is it not to be feared, that these mild and benevolent sayings of our common Lord and Saviour, are too much out of view, in such approaches to the God of mercy and peace: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God?" Many of the productions intended for the instruction of the populace, on these hallowed days, if we may judge from specimens, instead of inculcating humility, hatred of sin in ourselves, personal reformation, universal benevolence, and the like: are unhappily adapted to foster pride and self-confidence---a censorious spirit, calumny and misrepresentation, national antipathy, and a thirst for blood. Is not the war-hoop, if I may use the term, heard to resound from one corner of the land to the other; while prayers are poured out to the great Father of all, to aid our pious exertions in shedding the blood of our brethren---his intelligent creatures and offspring; and cordial thanks returned, if we have been successful in strewing the mangled bodies of thousands of them on the hostile plain, and sending their souls prematurely, and in the ferment of passion, to the throne of our common Judge, and the abodes of eternity? Do these things constitute the proper exercise of the fast which God hath chosen, the native expressions of a pious and contrite heart? Can we call this an acceptable day to the Lord? Do we lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting, an indispensable requisite in acceptable prayer, when we pray for success in the destructive art of shedding human blood, strewing the earth with carnage, demolishing and sacking cities, in making fatherless, widows and childless, the constant, the native fruits of war, and increasing

the guilt and miseries of mankind? No wonder, when such objects engross our wishes and our prayers, we should not receive, what we ask, because we ask amiss, that we may consume it upon our lusts, these diabolic passions of the human heart, whence come wars and fightings among us; which sense the connection of the passage alluded to seems to inculcate. When God blessed the first parents of our race, he added, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth;" but the war system sets itself in opposition to this benevolent mandate, and converts that race into a sort of canibals, that tear and devour each other, and make it their pastime to scatter arrows, fire-brands and death. Are these who delight in war, and its attendant evils, and so resemble him who was a murderer from the beginning, the sons and servants of the God of peace? The unworthy conduct, animadverted on in this particular, involves more guilt than we are aware of; yea, more than enough to bring down the vengeance of Heaven on these lands, tho' we had nothing else for which to account.

A growing inattention to religion, apparent among all ranks, and the important duties it prescribes—infidelity also in principle, and atheism in practice, with the too native result, a visible want of love to God and man, are evils too great, prominent, and general in our day, to escape the observation of the pious and reflecting part of the community, and too criminal in themselves, and pernicious in their consequences, not to be lamented by all that love God, and possess sentiments of Christian benevolence towards fellow men. Hath God, in his holy word, revealed to us his will, as the unerring rule of our faith and conduct, and presented so many powerful motives, to induce us duly to observe it, and can we be innocent in neglecting the duties we owe him in the different relations in which he deigns to stand to us? If I am a Father, says he, where is my honour? if I am a Master, where is my fear, or the reverence we owe him? Should we stand all the day idle in the market place, while so often invited and importuned to work in his vineyard, must not our conduct be foolish, ungrateful,

† "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not," that is, aright, or what is proper. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" James ch. iv Solomon is applauded and blessed by the God of heaven, because, when he put in his power to ask what he pleased, he did not ask the life of his enemies, like the humane Christians of modern times, but wisdom and knowledge, to fit him to rule with equity in the fear of the Lord, a prayer too seldom presented by the statesmen and rulers of the world, if we may judge by the measures of their government, and the favourite objects of their ambition and pursuit. See the passage at large 2 Chron. i.

and dangerous in the extreme, and merit the fate of the slothful and unprofitable servant? Have we a price put into our hand, wherewith to secure wisdom and happiness, so many talents entrusted to us, to occupy till our Lord come to require an account, and shall we be blameless, if we bury these in the earth, or expend them upon our lusts?

Hath God, Father, Son and Spirit, done so much for our salvation, and interposed their united authority to oblige us to work it out for ourselves, to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, by their visible fruits; and how shall we then escape, if we neglect a duty so interesting? How would an earthly ruler bear, to have the laws and statutes of the state, upon their due promulgation, so treated by the members of the community, were he possessed of sufficient power to force them? Would any parent or master submit, or incline to be so used? Do we not expect from our servants attention to our orders, and some diligence in our service? If then a vast proportion of professing Christians in our nation are disobedient to God, inattentive to their own best interests, and remiss in, or totally neglectful of the duties of religion, must they not increase the guilt of the land in which they dwell, and hasten their own doom? Jesus the Judge threatens to remove their candlestick out of his place, and to spue them out of his mouth, except they repent. That these serious evils, however, exist among us, and are, alas! of late upon the increase, notwithstanding the solemn admonitions of Providence, he that runs may read.

Prayer is a duty inculcated by the dictates of nature's light, and both enjoined and exemplified in the sacred oracles. Do not many, however, restrain prayer before God in the closet? Seldom, if ever, do they there present their humble homage to the God that made, preserves them, and supplies their various wants. In how few families, comparatively, is the worship of the great Lord of all regularly observed? How many, called Christians, and that claim their privileges, who, instead of maintaining an altar in their dwellings, whence incense and a pure offering ascend, convert them into nurseries for hell. The Spirit of God classes the families that call not on his name, with the heathen who know him not, and threatens to pour out his fury on both. Such as provide not for their own, especially for those of their own household, by religious instruction, and a pious example, deny the faith, according to the verdict of an apostle, and are worse than infidels. Alas! how many such baptized infidels abound in these lands! Some may, perhaps, overtake the duties of domestic religion on the Lord's day, when the claims of the world do not interfere, but entirely neglect them thro' the week. Others make a shift to present the

evening oblation, but, in their practice, never deem it a good thing to give thanks to God, to call upon his name, and speak of his loving kindness in the morning. Such as neglect, in whole, or in part, to provide for their own, in things infinitely more material than food and raiment, deny the faith, and so forfeit the Christian character and hope. Too many seem to consider religion merely as a bye work, an occasional external ceremony, forgetful of that demand, ' My son, give me thy heart.' Like the Innkeeper in Bethlehem, they will not exclude the Son of God altogether; but he will be allowed only the stable and the manger: while Satan, the world and the flesh occupy the chief appartments of the soul. Can not some, tho' not the oldest present, recollect the time when the voice of sacred melody might be daily heard from numerous abodes, as we passed along the streets? but ah! how sad the change in this respect! Many seem ashamed to bow the knee in humble homage to their Maker, while not ashamed to make their dwelling the seat of dissipation and folly. Their children and servants they train up, by their example, if not by their vicious maxims, for the wicked one, so that many of the former are heard to profane that venerable name by which we are called, and to lisp out various oaths, even before the organs of speech are well formed, while the practice of the latter shews whose they are, and whom they serve. Can we reflect, without horror, on the barbarous and unnatural conduct of the Jews, in offering their own helpless children in sacrifice to that detestable idol Moloch? And yet, those parents who bring them up in ignorance, vanity and vice, or contribute to this by their example, are chargeable, in the sight of Heaven, with the atrocious guilt of sacrificing them more effectually to that apostate spirit, who was a murderer from the beginning, and goes about seeking whom he may seduce and devour.

When ignorance, irreligion and vice prevail, no wonder infidelity and practical atheism should stalk abroad, refusing to be ashamed. That these are no exotic plants in our land, or, at least, are now naturalized, appears too obvious to need any laboured proof. So much is this the case, that many seem to think it impolite, and unbecoming a gentleman, to profess any veneration for that antiquated book termed the Bible, or any belief of the facts and doctrines it contains. He must be very little conversant in the world, who does not know, that this is lamentably the case. It was observed, in a preceding part of the subject, that the existence and increase of these evils among us, ought also to be viewed as a judgment from the Lord upon these lands; because many love not to retain the knowledge of

the truth, and are at no pains to become acquainted with it. They desire not, like new-born babes, the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby; and are, therefore, justly left to their own delusions. But it is likewise a sin of a very heinous nature, which is fast filling up the measure of our iniquity, and will not be forgotten in the day of retribution. Are our priests and nobles, our princes and commoners, valiant for the truth upon the earth, and exemplary for their attachment to the doctrines, and institutions of Christianity? In this respect, have not all ranks, alas! corrupted their ways? The sphere of his social intercourse, and observation must be very confined, who has not had access to observe certain characters that openly avow their disbelief of Divine revelation, in whole, or in part, and glory in having got rid of what they call the prejudices of education, begun by the nurse, and enforced by the priest. Hence many, in setting up for the character of gentlemen, or men of fashion, break dull jests upon the Bible, already, perhaps, a thousand times repeated; blaspheme the most sacred truths of the gospel, and exclaim, in the spirit of wine, Priestcraft, imposture, hypocrisy! Are not the greater part of our youth of rank and fortune trained up from their earliest years, not only to the neglect, but to the contempt and scorn of religion, virtue and sobriety? What a melancholy prospect of the state of religion and morals in the nation! When such visit foreign countries, with that early bias towards irreligion and vice, what can be expected, but that they should greedily imbibe, without reflexion, the most atheistical opinions; and, chusing for their associates congenial spirits, should be hurried away, by their impetuous and unbridled passions, into all the lewdness, debauchery, and excess of which human nature is capable? Returning to their native country, without any real improvement, they import the vices and pernicious tenets of the places and companies where they have been, in addition to those to which they were early inured; and, thus accomplished, become the very pests of the towns or districts where they reside, or possess any property or influence. These are the gentlemen, whose promiscuous connexions with such of the other sex, as they have been able to seduce, are sufficient to stock a country with a spurious brood, and fill it with incest and other abominations. Did the success of their intrigues bear proportion to their wishes, what depredations would they make on female virtue? These are the men who despise and deride honourable wedlock; yet presume to bring to that state the shattered remains of a debilitated constitution.

When the fool said in his heart, 'There is no God,' or came the length to wish there was none, it is added, 'they are

corrupt, they have done abominable works.' Corruption in practice is the sad consequence of infidelity in principle, and both are the native offspring of a depraved heart. Was religion intended only for the peasant, the mechanic, and the forlorn, a life of faith on the Son of God, and devotedness to his service, might be deemed degrading to a man of rank and fortune. But what is birth and external greatness, without virtue, or moral goodness? what power, estates, titles, retinue, and all the pomp of worldly grandeur, without worth and piety, tho' all concentrated in one person, but like decking an ox for the slaughter, or adorning an ass with fine trappings, and rich furniture, that would not fail to make the poor animal more ridiculous and despicable? Men may in words profess their belief of the being and perfections of God, yet in works deny him; for by their works ye shall know them. Practical atheism is no stranger in our land; for it appears barefaced almost every where. Many, even among the lower ranks, are now grown wiser than their teachers, wiser indeed, in their own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason. The phrenzy of infidelity hath seized them also, and, in this respect, they at once attain the envied character of men of fashion, and throw off the salutary restraints of religion, if not of common decency. How amazing the address of the prince of darkness, who, amidst the changes of human sentiment, and the revolutions of states and empires, still retains his sway over the heart of man, and makes successful efforts to increase the number of his willing vassals! Even those who hate, or oppose monarchy on earth, not seldom join with its friends in paying homage to this prince, and yielding ready obedience to his imperious mandates. In his service, rich and poor often meet together, and the servant can boast of equality with his master. If this fatal leaven be gradually leavening the mass of society, especially of the rising generation, how gloomy the prospect! A land of infidelity is a land of guilt, and on the verge of ruin; for when men can say by their practice, if not with their lips, 'The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord feeth not;' is it not just with him to reply, 'And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; but I will recompence their way upon their head?'

Men may exclaim against certain vices in others, but if, meanwhile, indulged in by themselves, out of their own mouth shall they be condemned. We have been often at war with the people of France, but seldom with their manners. Have we not imported, along with their levity, dissipation, and foppery in dress, the noxious plant of Deism? which prospers, and propagates itself as much with us, as in its parent soil. Having made them so long our pattern in fol-

ly, would it not be just with Heaven to make them our scourge and our terror? The frequented amusements of the stage are unhappily calculated to foster the fashionable vices of the day, and to promote the growth of infidelity. We have been also pestered with books, which raze the very foundations of natural, as well as revealed religion. By reason of the charms of composition, wit, and a lively fancy, some of these are the more dangerous and ensnaring; but poison is not the less fatal, tho' mixed with delicious liquors, and presented in a golden cup. Tho' the sophistry and blasphemies of such productions have been often detected and exposed by, men of extensive knowledge, and sound understanding; yet are they still retailled, with an air of triumph, as so many unanswerable arguments, or demonstrations. But the Christian religion is a brazen wall, against which enemies and scoffers may level their artillery to the close of time, without making the least impression, tho' the corruptions grafted upon it may suffer by the attack; for ' he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh' at such impotent efforts: ' the Lord shall have them in derision,' and cause them to recoil upon their authors.

But among the various reasons that may be assigned for the apparent increase of infidelity and irreligion of late, the conduct of many in the sacred office is too obvious to escape notice. With such it was usual to pray, in the discharge of their public function, for the downfall of Popery, &c. as hostile to the progress of genuine Christianity in the world, and its friend and hand-maid, rational, manly Freedom. But when Heaven is accomplishing this in the earth, instead of rejoicing that a system, so long accounted Antichrist, is so much abridged in its power and influence, and likely to receive soon a total overthrow, they seem at once to make it a common cause, terming that corrupt system ' the Christian faith, and the Christian religion,' and lamenting that it hath been degraded, in a neighbouring nation, from the rank and dignity it long held as the established religion, or the legal establishment of the state, whose ministers enjoyed vast secular dignities and revenues. Tho' the pure and undefiled religion of Jesus had been there previously professed, understood and enjoyed, the lamentation could scarce be more sincere and universal. But what religion was it which the French legislature have overthrown, or from which they have withdrawn legal support? Is it not the very same, which, not very long ago distressed, plundered, exiled, or massacred near two millions of Protestants in that very country, and all under the pretext of caring for their souls? Is it not the same religion which still maintains its ground at Rome and in popish countries, where ignorance, superstition, despotism and misery reign? Can a proposition and its reverse

be true at the same time? Popery is such a species of Christianity as hath, in every age since it appeared, waged war with real Christianity, and destroyed unknown myriads of its best friends; whence we have been taught, till of late, to view it as Antichrist. These two systems are so diametrically opposite, and have been always thought so by Protestants, that modern Clergy have much merit in discovering that they are the same faith, and one and the same religion. After admitting this, can they call the doctrine of transubstantiation absurd?

To hear then, those called Protestant clergy lamenting, from the pulpit, and the press, that God's altars have been impiously overthrown, and his prophets banished, or slain, by what has been done in that nation, to strip Popery of its legal establishment, its ministers of their vast and abused revenues and influence, and to punish, or restrain their active and disorderly efforts, to support or restore the ancient system of tyranny, superstition, and peculation in church and state, gives reason to suspect that these Clergy are embarked in one common cause with their Catholic brethren, are actuated by similar principles and motives, and that it is not real, primitive Christianity which excites their zeal, but their own secular interest and influence in society. When to this is added, their opposition to, and intemperate zeal against every thing like reform in church and state, and their virulent calumnies and misrepresentations of all that profess to have any such wishes and views; is it any way surprising, that men who have never candidly examined the train of evidence on which Christianity rests, and who have neither seen nor felt the reasonableness, majesty and advantages of the Christian religion, should be tempted to reject it in gross? There is nothing, perhaps, that tends more to keep infidelity in countenance, if not to propagate it in the earth, than the conduct and doctrine of many vested with the sacred office; of which Satan, that subtle politician, knows well how to avail himself. Tho' they have much to account for, in this respect; yet, such as are thence

+ To what a deplorable state of irreligion must that nation be reduced, in which many of the men, who should be the last to give up the spirit and power of Christianity, are got into the same epidemic unbelief and immorality that has over-run the rest of the nation? That in England, at this day, too many of that order of men whose business it is to support, by their doctrine and example, the belief and practice of Christianity, have betrayed their important trust; that they have made themselves too obnoxious to the reflexions of the enemies of religion, by engaging themselves in secular schemes for preferment, and some by notoriously immoral lives, is a truth not less certain than melancholy. I am aware, that in this tract I shall not have occasion to touch upon any subject more tender and delicate than this, and that it is very difficult to attack a set of clergy without wounding religion thro' their sides. And if the objections against those of the present age could be ascribed to human frailty, I should with pleasure do my best to palliate and excuse them, instead of exposing them to public view; being, in all cases, and in this especially of opinion, that

induced to reject or vilify Christianity, are quite uncandid, and inexcusable. The Oracles of truth forewarn of these very things, and point their most dreadful threatenings against corrupt churchmen, who have ever, under the cloak of their sacred function, been the most determined foes to the sacred rights of God and man; and the most servile flatterers of those in power, while able to reward their servility with the prospect of preferment.

The Son of God, and his apostles had not greater enemies upon earth than the Jewish priesthood; and it is mentioned as one of the most glorious triumphs of his grace, that a multitude of the priests became obedient to the faith. To the poor he preached the gospel, and we are told, that the common people heard him gladly. But this was mentioned to his reproach, ‘Have any of the rulers,’ viz. in church or slate, ‘believed on him?’ ‘These people that know not the law are accursed.’ The builders refused this stone, tho’ ordained to be the head stone of the corner, and stumbled upon it as a rock of offence. The priests of Paganism gave the same virulent opposition to Christianity, when promulgated in the heathen world; and the Roman catholic clergy acted a similar part at the Reformation; whence we may conclude, that there is something divine in a religion, which uniformly met opposition from such quarters. The outcry was, Innovation, innovation! these men turn the world upside down. The enemies of the religion of Jesus have no cause to boast of their fellow-labourers, an unprincipled

private offences ought to be reproved in private, and that deeds of darkness ought to remain in darkness. But what avails it that I, or any other writer, carefully conceal the faults of the clergy, if too many of their own body expose their shame, by embroiling themselves in politics and party causes, to the neglect and disgrace of their sacred function, by indulging themselves in all the luxury of theatres, music-gardens, wine and feasting, and some in other kinds of a more infamous nature?

The preceding quotation, still, I fear, too just and applicable, is from a valuable Tract entitled Britain’s Remembrancer: or, The Danger not over, supposed to have been written by President Forbes of the Court of Session. The occasion of it was the Rebellion in—45, which the worthy author improves as a call in Providence to this nation, to break off their sins by repentance; and our national character, and present circumstances make it a word too much in season still. Convinced of this, the Author of these Sermons republished it three years ago, along with a Moritory Address to Britain, respecting our prevailing sins, and the judgments of Heaven with which, we have reason to fear, they may be punished. Nothing is more foreboding than the inattention generally paid to Admonitions, founded upon the natural and necessary connexion of moral causes and effects, and enforced by the word and providence of God. The Author laments, that he should now have occasion to direct the attention of his Countrymen to these judgments as already inflicted, and in a train of farther execution, which, for a number of years back, he apprehended and deprecated in prospect. But the Lord’s purpose will stand, and he will do all his pleasure; for it would seem, he hath determined to punish us for our sins, because we still persist in them, and refuse to be reclaimed.

clergy, the Pope and the devil; for these have been always hostile to the cause and kingdom of Christ. The opposition of interested churchmen, therefore, to any thing that promises to ameliorate the civil or religious condition of mankind, should it happen to infringe on their secular power and interest, as it is not new, need not seem strange, or prove stumbling to any. Yet tho', as a body, such have too much been their prevailing temper and conduct, many individuals of that order, in every age, have approved themselves friends and benefactors of mankind. But God sometimes permits men to be tried with some appearances of pretence for confirming their infidelity, and hardening themselves, as in the case of Pharaoh and his magicians; however, he never leaves them without sufficient means to distinguish betwixt truth and falsehood, and to discover their duty, if sincere in wishing to know the former, and practise the latter. So far as any writings employ false reasoning, to impose upon the ignorant and unwary, the better they are known, the sooner will they sink into contempt with those, who make the dictates of sound reason and of Scripture, which are never at variance, the rule and ground of their judgment. Error cannot endure the light, it flies to shade and subterfuge: but truth, like gold, bears the strictest scrutiny, and gains by every repeated trial.

The want of love to God, the centre of perfection, and the source of happiness; and of benevolence towards fellow men, is a sin, of the guilt of which few seem to be aware. These two I connect, because God joins them together, and indeed, they should never be separated. ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’ By how few are these precepts properly understood, and duly observed? How contracted the sphere of our philanthropy, or brotherly love, as commonly exercised! Difference in opinion, in external circumstances, in climate or local situation; difference in complexion and temporal interest, or some party considerations, are sufficient to check its flow, or totally divert its streams. Few feel these ties of fraternity, or brotherhood, by which all men are bound to one another, as the offspring of one common Father. Not to love our brother, or fellow creature, is, in God’s estimation, to hate him; and ‘whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and abideth in death.’ The decline of Christian affection bears pace with the increase and prevalence of iniquity: ‘And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.’

‘God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God.’ This sacred principle, in a manner, constitutes his very nature,

and manifests itself in all his works and ways. He is justly entitled to our supreme affection, both for what he is in himself, and for what he is to us, and, hath done for us: and, therefore, not to love him is to be guilty of the greatest iniquity. So thought the apostle Paul, whose heart glowed with love both to God and man, when he uttered these words: 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maranatha; that is, according to the import of these Syriac terms, Let him be accursed, or a victim devoted to divine justice, till the Lord come to execute the curse upon him. Can it be a light crime, which could draw forth such a doom from one, who travailed as in birth, till Christ should be formed in the heart of others the hope of glory? Not to love God is to hate him; for here there can be no medium: and of what punishment, suppose ye, that man worthy, who hates the Author of his being, and of all his enjoyments, and the Saviour that hath shed his precious blood, to procure the remission of sin, and the possession of eternal life? If then our land abounds with those, who are strangers to that brotherly affection, which the sacred oracles every where inculcate, and the Author of Christianity hath exemplified; if it abounds with those who love not God, nor Jesus Christ, or, himself being judge, who hate him; say, do we not richly deserve the execution of his righteous vengeance? and are we not ripe for his judgments? Few feel compunction for this heinous sin, or are engaged in lamenting it. But how shall he who is the source and Author of all excellence, perfection and felicity, bear with the want of love to himself, in his intelligent and dependant creatures; or with their giving a decided preference to the devil, the world and the flesh, his enemies and theirs? for the human heart must be possessed by one or other of these rivals.

'The great Author of all existence hath appointed one day in seven, to be observed as a holy Sabbath, or rest to himself; and tho' this institution, so far as it respects the proportion of time required, be of a positive nature, yet is it founded in reason, and attended, in its observance, with the most beneficial consequences. Should we, however, so far from remembering this day to keep it holy, make free thereon to think our own thoughts, speak our own words, and seek our own pleasures, can we be innocent in the sight of Heaven? This is the only positive precept that was promulgated, and incorporated with the moral law, intimating hereby, perhaps, that tho', under the Christian system, the day would be changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, yet the spirit of the precept, requiring a seventh part of our time, the portion allotted to acts of necessity and mercy excepted, to be devoted to the

Lord, would remain always in force. It would be almost endless to enumerate the various ways, by which the Christian sabbath, or the Lord's day is profaned, and its sacred rest violated. This is observable among all ranks; and what if 'the hand of the princes and rulers be chief in this trespass?' What was merely ceremonial in this institution was done away with the Mosaic ritual; but its moral obligation is still in force, and will remain as binding on the Christian as it was on the Jewish church. It bears a friendly aspect both on man and beast, abstracted from the religious considerations that recommend its observance. Tho' the sanctification of the Sabbath is far from constituting the whole of religion; yet can there be no true religion without it: for according as this is observed or neglected, genuine piety will flourish or decay. Such as pay no regard to this day of sacred rest, and habitually neglect to assemble for the purpose of religious worship thereon, are found, in general, if not always, destitute of the principles, as well as the practice of religion. Can any thing be more reasonable, than that he, who is the Author of our being, our time and talents, should require one day in seven to be devoted more immediately to his own service? and yet how many thousands in these lands make no conscience of a duty so equitable in itself, and so beneficial in its observance! This day becomes to many the most useless, or the most criminally spent in all the week; for whatever is unbecoming, or unlawful on other days, must be doubly so on the Lord's day. It might be more usefully, if not more innocently employed at their ordinary occupations.

What numbers forsake the assembling of themselves with

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[†] I recollect to have been told some years ago, when in the neighbourhood of a certain nobleman's seat, who is not remarkable for his attention to the laws of God, or even to consistency of conduct before the world, that he was one Lord's day out with his hounds, as was sometimes his reputed manner, in company with a certain English gentleman. This gentleman feeling, perhaps, some remorse, for even such have their occasional compunctions, remarked, 'My Lord Duke, this will never do, if we go on at this rate, God will send us to hell,' to which the other, affecting to make light of the remark, replied, 'Never fear that, can you think God will send such people as we to hell? No; he will treat us like Gentlemen,' or words to that purpose. Whether this was overheard, and related by the servants, or told afterwards by themselves as a fine jest, is not material; but it was talked of by the people in the neighbourhood as a certain fact. There is some truth in the above saying, tho' the person in question might not intend it; for since irreligion, profanity and profligacy of manners are thought to be no way foreign to the character of a gentleman, or by some, as constituting an essential part of it, 'God will, doubtless, treat them according to their character, and leave them to reap the fruits of their own doings. They that honour me,' saith he, 'I will honour; but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed;' that is, shall be held in absolute contempt, and, one time or other, made contemptible before their fellow creatures.

God's people on this day, or give only a partial attendance! This hath, especially of late, become the manner of too many, even in places once noted for exemplary conduct in this respect. Some are never to be seen in the sanctuary of God, perhaps, above twice or thrice a-year; when, for the sake of form, or some other unworthy motive, they take their seat at a communion table. O what inconsistency! Others are seldom, if ever, to be seen there, on the forenoon of the Lord's day, as if three or four hours a-week were too much to spend in these exercises, in which they profess to hope to find their happiness thro' eternity. It is plain, they love not the place where his honour dwelleth; and, consequently, can have no just hope to enjoy his heavenly kingdom, unless a gracious change be produced upon them, the means of which they thus neglect or despise. Some have their reasons for absenting on the preceding part of the day, which will not however, stand the test at the bar of God. Others cannot give their attendance on the latter; for there are whose God is their belly, as the apostle speaks; and this god must be worshipped on the first as much, if not more than on any day of the week. Hence, with many, it is a day of giving and receiving visits, and of mutual feasting, perhaps, to intemperance; thus caring for, and pampering the body, while the nobler part the soul, is quite neglected, and left to starve.

Thus sloth, or attention to dress, and the gratification of their lower appetites, the mean deity to which many devote their time and care, unhappily consume the best part of this sacred day. Or perhaps, they have sat so late, or rather early at their cups the preceding night, that they find themselves quite indisposed for such services, and can scarce be ready by the afternoon, to give their bodily presence at public worship, while the heart is absent, or the senses drowned in sleep. The command enjoining the due observance of this day, is thus prefaced, 'Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy;' which implies not only the actual sanctification of that sacred portion of our time, but also a previous care to be found in a suitable frame of spirit when it approaches. They forget this, who are lost amidst the stuff and bustle of the world, when that day overtakes them, or so long as the laws of the land permit; or who terminate one week, and commence another at the tavern, as if it was set apart for celebrating a feast, in honour of that heathen idol Bacchus. Those who thus spend the first part of that day, are generally to be found among the street and field strollers on the evening, when the weather and season permit; thus tempting Satan, compared to the fowls in the parable, to take away the seed of the word, sown thro' the day on their hearts, which are like the way side, callous, beaten, and common to

all passengers. They associate in circles and clubs, it is to be feared, for vain and worldly conversation; but how will they endure to be hereafter bound together in bundles, like tares, in order to be cast into a fire which shall not be quenched? Thus they harden one another in their vain courses. While those in the higher circles profane the Sabbath in their own way, such is the manner of ~~too~~ many in the lower ranks in life.

But while we lament that of the poor, vast multitudes neglect the means of knowledge and grace, and are sunk in ignorance and vice, drinking up iniquity as the thirsty ox drinketh up the water; should we say, with the prophet, ‘Surely these are poor, they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God. I will get me unto the great men: for they have known the way of the Lord and the judgment of their God;’ is there not reason to fear, we may add with him, ‘but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds, yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in the trespass?’ Visit the princely habitations of such, and you will rarely hear grateful acknowledgments to the Author of all blessings, in prayer and praise. Perhaps, such services are held up to derision, as the effusions of a heated brain, as mere cant, enthusiasm, priestcraft, and hypocrisy. With such, in general, religion, neither in practice nor in theory, is the order of the day; tho’, to save appearances, they may occasionally assume seeming zeal for its interests. Are men of eminence in station, from the peer and representative downwards, exemplary for due attendance upon public worship? Alas! the very reverse is too notoriously the case. We have no room, in this respect, to say to any, Stand by; for we are holier than you. Our landed interest may be well represented in the state; but is it not obvious to the world, that they are but poorly represented in the house of God? More frequently are some to be seen at the tavern, the theatre, and, I fear, the brothel may be added, these haunts of fashionable resort in the modish world. When the sacred rest of the Sabbath is invaded, under the forms of justice, and the sanction of legal authority; and when persons, high in rank, or in office, in Church or state, countenance or defend such conduct, the guilt becomes more aggravated, and the consequences more serious and extensive†. Many of our public measures, especially in times

† The Author begs leave to mention a few circumstances, out of many, in illustration of the above remark. It is well known that the master Bakers of the city of London, commenced a process in the Court of King’s Bench, against their Journey-men, some time ago, to oblige these to work upon the Lord’s day; and obtained a decision in their favour, obliging them to work the whole day, at their masters discretion, or abide the pains of law. Parliament, with a view, it would seem, to modify this decision, brought in, and passed a Bill last

of war, make very free with this institution; tho' at no period should a people be more afraid of offending God. What part of military parade is discontinued on the Lord's day? as if the

session, entitled, A Bill for the better observation of the Lord's day, commonly called Sunday; in which it is expressly enacted, that they shall be obliged to work, only to one o'clock in the afternoon; and considering the early hour at which they begin their work, and the nature of it, is it not easy to see how very unfit they must be for worshipping God on the after part of the day? If any earthly court or legislature have a right to enforce the plain and positive violation of the Divine law in one instance, why not in another, or in respect of the whole law? for the whole is enforced by the same authority, and he, or they who thus offend, or cause to offend, in one point, is, in the judgment of Heaven guilty of all. And if they possess a right to constrain about 8000 individuals, the supposed number of mechanics of the above description in the Metropolis, to violate an express mandate of Heaven, by servile labour, on this day, upon pain of incurring certain penalties, in case of non-compliance; must we not grant that they have equal power over all the members of the Community?

One of the Dignitaries of the Church of England, Archdeacon Paley of Carlisle, attempts to prove, in his Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, —Ch. 6. of the use of Sabbatical institutions, that the observance of the Sabbath is no farther of moral obligation on Christians, than to attend on public worship, and even, that only in consequence of the State having interposed its authority. We have not heard that he was ever called to any account for advancing this strange position. If others in the sacred office go not that length, yet the example of many of them on that day does not merit imitation. Except what is termed canonical hours, how is it spent by Clergy and people? and even during these, can it be said, that they remember it, to keep it holy?

Who has not heard of the Book of Sports in the reign of the Stuart family, enjoining on the subjects the gross profanation of this holy day? Among the various caules of a solemn Fast and Humiliation to be kept by the King and the whole Church, upon Thursday 26th of December 1650, the following are to be seen—"The great Profanity of his Court for many years, too much tolerated and countenanced by him, in Masks and Sabbath-breakings, at last publicly by him in many things by the Book of Sports"!

Was it an act of mercy or necessity, lately to employ 500 carpenters on the Lord's day, to fit up accommodations at Frogmore, for the guests that were to celebrate certain nuptials?—On the Lord's day the artillery, intended for the siege of Dunkirk, was carried from Woolwich, and shipped; as also the troops and Emigrants for the Quiberon bay expedition, to the number of 10,000. The above circumstances are mentioned on the authority of several of the London papers, in which they appeared. What bustle! what profanation of that day, between those that were employed on the occasion, and the spectators! May we not read our sin, and its punishment in the disgrace and disappointment incurred in both cases?

What bustle and servile work may be often seen, in our Dock-yards, on the Lord's day! Have we not often heard of Concerts on this day, and of Clubs for the purpose of Drunkenness and riot, both sanctioned and attended by persons of high rank? A certain pious and judicious author, advertizing to the profanation of this day, during the inauspicious period of the American war, hath this remark, "What mean the Sunday expeditions, the pompous parading by land and water, which all the world hath lately heard of, and multitudes witnessed? What mean the levees at Court, the musical bands and concerts, and pleasure companies permitted about some of the royal palaces, on that day, consecrated, by the authority of Heaven, to sacred rest, the service of the King of Kings, and attention to spiritual and eternal things?" By these, and a thousand other ways, too tedious to mention, which fall not under the description of work either of necessity or mercy, is this sacred rest invaded and profaned in our isle.

laws of Heaven were not binding on those, who enlist to serve earthly princes, or the sword could give a right to violate that sacred rest. The followers of Mahomet do not so treat the institutions of that impostor, nor do they presume to appear in their religious assemblies with military weapons.

The case of a nation becomes truly alarming, when all ranks pervert their ways, and when those who give law to fashion, instead of exemplifying the Christian character, turn their back on the public, as well as the private institutions of religion; so that, were their example universally copied, we might have shut sanctuaries, silent sabbaths, and not the shadow of piety remaining. Once it was far otherwise in these lands; but, alas! in this respect, how are we fallen! It is to little purpose that the springs of industry among the poorer sort are shut up one day in seven, as the Divine mandate requires; if on that very day the sluices of sensual amusement, dissipation and folly, be set open among the great and affluent, and permitted to flow, without check or intermission? The common people may be restricted from their favourite diversions on the Lord's day; but what avails this, if families of the first rank and distinction are suffered to indulge in practices that are unlawful on any day, and prostitute their houses into a place of rendezvous for the votaries of pleasure, gaming, and dissipation of both sexes? While so many, honoured with the appellation of noble and gentle, desert the places of public worship, as if infected with a pest, form parties of pleasure on the Lord's day, and spend the evening walking abroad, when the season permits, or at cards and concerts; and while, by their impious, or immoral practices, their mansions are converted virtually into synagogues of Satan, or temples of vice, what can be expected of their children, servants and dependants? Do not these, and the like things, more effectually degrade nobility, than the decree of the Legislature of a neighbouring nation? Where they prevail, and such are the sabbaths thousands keep, do they not mark a people ripe for ruin? If our Brethren on the other side the Tweed be notorious for the gross profanation of the holy sabbath, few regarding it but during what is called canonical hours, and still fewer devoting it to the proper exercises of the day, is it not to be feared, that we in this part of the Isle, and especially our people of fashion, are making quick advances in copying their example, in this and their other worst practices, without imitating their virtues, tho' perhaps, not in so open and avowed a manner?

In what manner many spend the Christian Sabbath, and discharge the duties of their station, the day of final decision will declare; tho' it be not already a secret: for, unashamed of their conduct, they proclaim their sins, like Sodom, and hide them not. Perhaps they think, as in the instance referred to already,

that the Judge of all the earth will treat them hereafter, according to their rank, wealth and titles in the present state. Little do many seem to think, that a single night may send even those, who are, like Dives, clothed with fine linen and purple, and fare sumptuously every day, into these regions where not so much as a drop of water shall be given to procure a momentary ease of their torment. Alas, into how small a compass may the religion of many be reduced! But since they claim a right to follow their own way, and walk in a vain shew; God will follow his way, which is to render to every one according to their works, and to exact the more of those to whom much was given, to turn the wicked into hell, and all that forget God. Oh, that all ranks would timely reflect on their ways, and doings that have not been good, and return to the Lord, while there is forgivness with him, that he may be feared, and mercy and plenteous redemption, that he may be sought unto!

If the things suggested above be facts, if the Christian sabbath be profaned such various ways among us, notwithstanding our religious profession and advantages; with what consistency can we reproach others for their unhallowed freedoms with this day, be their conduct, in this respect, ever so reprehensible? Let us cast the beam first out of our own eye, before we proceed to cast the mote out of our neighbours; reform ourselves, ere we accost others, Stand by; for we are holier than you, else, in reproaching them, we condemn ourselves. Let such as preside in Church and State take an example from that pious magistrate and reformer, Nehemiah, who set himself in earnest, to reform the abuses which had crept into both; and to give that example weight, let their own private conduct recommend and enforce it. And let all ranks, as they tender the favour, and would avoid the wrath of the Almighty, 'turn away their foot from the sabbath, from doing their pleasure on his holy day; and call the sabbath A delight; the holy of the Lord, Honourable, and honour him, not doing their own ways, not finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words: Then shall they delight themselves in the Lord; and he will cause them to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed them with, the heritage of Jacob; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.'

The spirit of insubordination, both towards God, and man, which appears in our day, is a great and foreboding evil. Every sin implies a disavowal of the Divine authority, and is, in effect, an act of homage to the prince of darkness. Sinners of all descriptions break the chain of subordination that knits earth to Heaven, and subjects man to God as the supreme ruler, and to those who are appointed by him as subordinate. The language of such is that of rebels, We will not have this

man to reign over us; Who is the Lord that we should obey him? Our tongues are our own, who is lord over us? If they say not so with their lips, such is the language at least of their practice, which speaks more audibly. When men revolt from their allegiance to God, and refuse subjection to his righteous government, no wonder they should spurn at the yoke of fellow creatures, who are fallible in their measures, and often oppressive in their administration. The various commotions that have existed in different places of late, some of which have given occasion to the effusion of blood, and to executions, are to be viewed in a serious light, as tokens of the Divine displeasure; and ought to be lamented as so many bitter fruits of iniquity. Should these unhappily increase, and the state of things furnish a plausible pretext, who can define the consequences? for by them God sometimes executes his vengeance on a people, when they are ripe for his judgments. By them too, he punishes disrespect to his own authority, in those who ought to exert their power and influence for his honour. When they become general or extensive, they are the hurricanes, tempests, and earthquakes of the political or moral world, by which a righteous God accomplishes his own purposes, even while he punishes the agents for their unworthy ends and motives. All this hath been lately exemplified in a neighbouring nation, and is more or less verified in the history of the world in every age. When these floods lift up their voice, and their waves, he alone, who sits as king upon them, can say with effect, Peace, be still, hitherto shall ye come, and no farther, and here shall your violence be stayed. To him it belongs to still the tumults of the people; whose wrath shall praise him, and to the remainder of which, what is not necessary for this purpose, he will set restraining bounds.

But while we must reprobate the spirit often discovered on such occasions, and lament its immediate fruits and effects, it is worth inquiring whence that spirit originates, and derives support, or to what source it may be justly traced. Perhaps, upon inquiry, it may be found, in one view, to derive much of its fatal influence from a source we would at first least suspect, and to be justly chargeable on many who may be loudest in their complaints against it. Is not God the original source of all just power and authority, by whom kings reign, and princes and rulers decree justice? He is the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and, in a special manner, claims their allegiance and homage. As such, is he not therefore, justly entitled to their first and chief regard? Should those then, who share most of his temporal favours, and whose rank and station in society place them like a city set on a hill, that cannot be hid, instead of revering the Author of their being, and the dispens-

fer of all their advantages, set the example of contemning his authority, and neglecting his institutions, do they not, in effect, teach their inferiors to despise their own authority, and to break that chain of subordination which links all the ranks in society together, and the whole to the throne of God? In vain do such inculcate loyalty to earthly rulers, if their own conduct is, mean while, visibly fraught with disloyalty, rebellion, and treason to the King of heaven. The inference is neither forced, nor remote, but must strike at first view, If these, who are under such peculiar obligations to Heaven, set the example of contemning the authority, on which they found their own, with what consistency can they punish us, should we in any punctilio happen to disrespect theirs, when the king himself, as Solomon tells us, is served of the field which we cultivate with our hands?

How would it answer to inculcate this doctrine upon the privates of a great army, Respect the person, and obey the commands of the subaltern officers, but hold both the person and orders of your head Commander in absolute contempt? and yet, such is the language of their practice who are disobedient, profane, and irreligious towards God, however loud and clamant they may be in expressions of loyalty to their prince. Influence always descends; for it is well known how prone the lower classes of mankind are to imitate the fashions, and the manners of the great. When these are unfriendly to the claims of virtue and piety, or make free to violate and neglect their laws and institutions, as is too often the case; let them not wonder, if the inferior ranks in life prove refractory, immoral, and despisers even of lawful authority: for such is the native tendency of an example which they are but too apt to copy. Should those who move in the higher circles of society remain corrupt, and dissipated, what can be expected but that their conduct, and example, like so many poisoned fountains, still emitting noxious streams, should taint the lower orders? If such ever enjoin the duties of morality on their inferiors or dependants, or reprove their disorderly conduct, what good effects can such injunctions or reproofs be supposed to produce? The old sarcasm still applies, Physician, heal thyself; for precepts, counteracted by example, become fruitless, or rather, quite ridiculous, and retort with severity on the giver. All the pains and penalties the civil magistrate can inflict, tho' these should be multiplied from day to day, will not go half so far to reform a people, or secure their sober and regular conduct, as the good example of those whom they are accustomed to consider as their superiors. The operation of the former may prove unfriendly to virtue, and even to good order; while the

latter carries conviction to the heart, and attracts by the most alluring, but powerful charms.

Among the various causes which have contributed to the degradation of nobility in a neighbouring nation, and, may not I add, of the rulers in church and state? this has been none of the least; they had cast off the fear of God, and refused to walk in his commandments and ordinances blameless: and he was therefore, justly provoked to cast them down from their eminence, to write their name in the dust, and either to scatter them, like fugitives and vagabonds among the nations, or to bring them prematurely to the grave with blood. In all this, he hath acted the part of a righteous Judge, whatever sinful hand men might have in these unhappy events. So true is that saying of the Almighty, which he often verifies in his providence; They that honour me, I will honour: but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed, shall be held in abhorrence, and reduced to a state of ignominy and contempt. For the sins of that people, which are still visited, their rulers, as threatened, have of late been many; and for the sins of these rulers, particularly their contempt of God and religion, their reign hath been short, turbulent, and bloody. Infidelity and vice were not confined to laymen of rank, but leavened also the rulers and pastors of the church, of which the world hath had too many glaring proofs; and those in other nations who copy their example, have reason to fear they shall be made partakers in their plagues. But while the natural tendency and judicial punishment of irreligion and immorality in the great, is the corruption of the morals of the lower orders, and consequently the destruction of due subordination in society, a consideration which merits the serious attention of the great and affluent; let none foolishly suppose that this can justify any irregular practices even in the lowest and meanest of the people. One law is to all; and tho' impropriety of conduct may be less inexcusable in some; yet, vice of every kind is its own punishment; and every man, of whatever rank or station, shall receive from God according to his works. Let none, therefore, surmise that the above remarks are intended to extenuate, far less to justify, any outrages of which the lower classes in society may be guilty; for, in candour, they will bear no such construction; tho' indeed, they serve to aggravate the vices of those who enjoy superior advantages, and to point out the connection, established under the Divine government, betwixt vice and misery or anarchy, and between a pious and virtuous conduct, and good order and prosperity; a circumstance that ought not to be passed over in silence, or disregarded by the great and affluent.

Oppression is a crime which is threatened, every where in

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Scripture, with the most awful expressions of God's displeasure, "For the oppression of the poor, for the fighting of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord, I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him;" or would ensnare him, as the margin reads it. The Psalmist tells us, that He executeth righteousness or justice and judgment for all that are oppressed; and in so doing, often breaks, as it is expressed, their oppressors in pieces. Such may address him with David, "Let our sentence come forth from thy presence: let thine eyes behold the things that are equal;" nor will they address him in vain. A court of equity is ever sitting in heaven, to receive appeals from the wrongful decisions of men here below, which shall all be reviewed; and to listen to the cry of their oppression, and arraign the conduct of their oppressors; and in that court a Judge presides whose impartial hand holds the scales of justice even; whose unerring eye marks the least inclination of either; and from whose sentence injured innocence is therefore taught to expect redress. The visitation of this crime had a principal share in all the judgments inflicted on the world, since its destruction by water, to the present day; because it hath been found to exist in every age, and often to prevail. You all know that this was the procuring cause of the plagues inflicted on Egypt, and of the destruction of Pharaoh, and his host in the red sea. The violence that was in their hands constituted a principal part of Nineveh's guilt; from which, and their every other evil way, they were exhorted to turn; and from which they actually turned, God being judge; whence he repented of the evil that he had said he would do unto them, and did it not. Tho' the Jews were an highly favoured people, yet were they prone to oppres their poor brethren; whence they often procured themselves great calamities. Nor can this crime be now less offensive in the sight of Heaven, or productive of less serious consequences.

The poor, the fatherless, the stranger and the widow, God claims, in every age and country, as the objects of his peculiar care; whence, to oppress them, is to commit treason against him, which he will not fail to recompence. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon was a successful warior, and great oppressor in the earth, causing terror and desolation in the land of the living. In the 13th and 14th chapters of Isaiah's prophecy, you may, however, trace, at your leisure, his own fearful fate, when he had served the purposes of Divine providence, as a scourge in God's hand to chastise the rebellious nations, and particularly the wicked Jews. God musters the armies of his wrath, threatens to destroy the Metropolis of the empire, by the Medes, and gives a striking description of its overthrow and desolation. Upon that solemn occasion, this proverb was taken up, respecting both the monarch and his capital, "How

hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city, or the exactress of gold, ceased! The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers. He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke; he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth." The nations are represented as tranquil and joyful at his fall; for the debasement, or demise of such men is a general blessing: "The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing. Yea, the fir-trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us." Hell, or the regions of the dead, are introduced as in a state of commotion at the descent of this once potent tyrant; and the kings of the earth, to whom he was a terror in his day, as rising up, in ghastly pomp, to exult over him in their turn. "Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak, and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viol: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations!" Such as had access to witness the catastrophe are brought in saying, "Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms? That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof, that opened not the house of his prisoners?" Then follow the judgments of Heaven upon himself, "because he had destroyed the land, and slain his people;" and upon his offspring: for "the seed of evil doers shall never be renowned;" while the Lord threatens to sweep his capital with the besom of destruction, as an emblem of the dread overthrow of mystical Babylon, which is now approaching. Let the oppressors of the earth, who so often moisten it with human blood, trace in the whole passage their own impending doom: for God will doubtless destroy them who corrupt and destroy the earth,† in whom they have a potent foe.

It may therefore, be asserted as a certain fact, that wherever oppression prevails, and, especially, wherever it receives the sanction of law, and of those in authority, whose sanction or connivance is necessary to its very existence; there will God visit it, one time or other, with signal tokens of his anger. Happy would I be, to have it in my power to say, that no such crime exists within the precincts of the British dominions, so often celebrated as the seat of liberty, and the envy of the world.

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† See 11th of Rev. 18th v. text and margin;

But facts are stubborn things, and their evidence cannot be overthrown by strokes of rhetoric, or high swelling words of vanity. It is to be feared, that this Heaven-daring vice exists, and exerts itself in various forms among us. Is there no such thing to be seen or felt, in our land, as what the Scriptures call "Grinding the faces of the poor?" If this is not the object, it is the effect of various species of monopolies, that too generally prevail. Let the bounties of Heaven be dispensed with a sparing or liberal hand, exertions are still made to raise, or keep up the price of the necessaries of life, to the great detriment and oppression of the poor. So unfeeling are many, that no advance in the price of these articles, can come up to the bounds of their wishes; which, like the horse-leach, ever cry, Give, give. Not content with this, some are so lost to all sense of common honesty, that they will adulterate their commodities, and use false weights and measures in their retail. These, and the like things are exceedingly aggravated in the sight of God, and cannot fail to be punished; unless followed by repentance and restitution.

Certain classes and descriptions of men feel the rod of oppression more sensibly*. In our Eastern and Western foreign dependancies, do no instances of this occur? or rather, hath not oppression there assumed the form, and acquired the strength of a system? Of the truth of this, the Slave trade alone furnishes a flagrant and disgraceful proof. Our conduct in this affair will scarce bear to be mentioned; but tho' we should pass it over in silence, Heaven, so much insulted, and set at defiance by its continuance in present circumstances, will not fail to animadvert upon it; yea, hath partly done it already†.

* In the Highlands, too much of the feudal system still remains. The poor people there endure many hardships, of which those unacquainted with their situation, can have no conception. In times of war, levies of men are often made in a manner, that would disgrace the most arbitrary system on earth; at least, in many instances. And do not the sea-faring part of the nation too, endure great hardships, in being impressed into the service; and the troops of the line, by being detained for life? Are not Entails oppressive in their operation, and hostile to the claims of nature, and of justice, when they defraud near relatives of the right of inheriting what would in equity be their due, and society also, in the case of contracted debts? Can it be said, that justice is dispensed without oppression, when a cause may be protracted for many years, before a final decision can be obtained, till a load of expence is incurred? whence a person of wealth may easily evade, or ward off the claims of justice, when his antagonist is not in case to contend with him; and whence too, a prudent man will rather forego his right, or submit to certain loss, than risk the anxiety, the expence, and precarious issue of a tedious litigation.

† In what other light can we view the fatal disasters which have now, once and again, accompanied our attempts to defend these islands, where we patronize and sanction oppression of the worst kind? The very elements are contending against us, announce the wrath of God, and plead the cause of his oppressed, and injured creatures. There is reason to fear, that such as may escape

Let the dealers in this traffic consider what the prophet saith, " Wo unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbours service without wages, and giveth him not for his work." What the Lord saith by Moses, merits also their attention; " Thou shalt neither vex a stranger nor oppress him. Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me; I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." In the myriads of Widows, Fatherless and Orphans that swarm in our land, bereaved of their husbands and fathers by the sword of war, we may see the execution of this threatening, and the punishment of this traffic. But there it shall not rest. What God said of ancient Israel, and their oppressors the Egyptians, corresponds with his usual procedure, and may be yet verified in the case of the people in question; whom our avarice hath dragged from their native soil, and reduced to a state of the most abject servitude; " Know of a surety that that nation whom they shall serve will I judge: and afterwards shall they come out with great substance." Hear this, O Britons, and tremble at the prospect of such retribution!

Like Pharaoh, we have been deaf to God's voice, pleading with us lately, by his vicegerent conscience, constrained to speak in no fewer than 500 petitions, many of which were signed by thousands; and, like him, I fear, we shall see our guilt and folly, only when it shall be too late to prevent the execution of

the dangers of the deep, may find, like many of their brethren, a premature grave in that land of Bondage, whither they are sent. The attempts to secure what hath been acquired, or used unjustly, God often blasts; while he visits the persons, or property of oppressors, and such he accounts us in respect of our African brethren, with awful tokens of his displeasure.

In the late debates in the House of Commons, a member asserted, that no fewer than 500 Petitions had been presented in that House against the Slave trade. Mr Wilberforce told them, when they refused to answer the prayer of these petitions, " That they offered the highest insult to the God of heaven, by voting the contingance of the bloody traffick, immediately on their return from Fasting and Praying!" If what Isaiah saith applies to oppression in general, much more to this species of it; " The spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord God of hosts." Strong as this expression and image is, to denote grievous oppression; yet is it exceeded by the prophet Micah; The passage, as rendered by Dr Lowth, runs; " Hear, I pray you, ye chiefs of Jacob; and ye princes of the house of Israel: is it not yours to know what is right? Ye that hate good, and love evil; who tear their skin from off them; and their flesh from off their bones: who devour the flesh of my people; and flay from off them their skin: and their bones they dash in pieces; and chop them asunder, as morsels for the pot; and as flesh thrown into the midst of the cauldron." Such language we ought to view as addressed to ourselves, whence we may apply what follows; " Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings." If such our conduct, let us not suppose God will hear, or avert his wrath.

the merited vengeance. God will not be mocked by the pleas of avaricious traders in human flesh, or the pitiful pretexts of statesmen to secure their infamous traffic. Pharaoh had plausible reasons of state to plead for not letting Israel go; but these cost him his kingdom, his life, and the life of his first-born; and wo shall be to them who copy his example, if the God of the oppressed Hebrews, be the God and judge of the whole earth. "They that walk uprightly, walk surely: but the way of transgressors is hard." The wicked are caught in their own snares, to whom there shall be many sorrows.

The heavy charge of blood, or murder is often brought against the Jews, with whom blood is said to have touched blood, and the land to have been thereby defiled. The Lord saith by one prophet, "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood;" and by another, "Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." The term in the original here, as also elsewhere, is in the plural, probably, to denote the various ways by which the awful guilt of murder was contracted. Upon this a noted Commentator (Henry) saith, "Their hands were full of blood, that is, they were guilty of murder, rapine, and oppression, under colour of law and justice. The people shed blood, and the rulers did not punish them for it; the rulers shed blood, and the people were aiding and abetting, as the elders of Jezreel were to Jezebel in shedding Naboth's blood. Malice is heart murther in the account of God; he that hateth his brother in his heart, hath in effect his hands full of blood." But I shall not tarry to inquire into the grounds of this solemn charge, as brought against the Jewish nation, being much more concerned to see how far it may apply to ourselves, as one of our national sins, for which we are visited with the judgments of Heaven. Here you will bear with me a little, while I attempt to shew the cause we have to plead guilty to the charge; lest, by a sinful silence, I should offend our common Maker, and bring the guilt of blood on my own soul.

Have not many thousands suffered in our land, both under Popery and Episcopacy, for their attachment to the truth, or following the dictates of conscience? Many of these suffered, not only in the confiscation of their property, whence many estates were originally acquired, but also in the imprisonment, or exile of their persons; and not a few to the death, not counting their life dear to them, so be they might finish their course with joy. Their blood was precious in the sight of Heaven, more precious indeed, than the blood of many kings, captains, and great men; of whose flesh God threatens to make a supper for the fowls of Heaven, and the beasts of prey; called, by way of eminence, "The supper of the great God." He will

therefore, certainly visit it, in a more signal manner than he hath yet done; because we have never as a nation lamented it, and implored forgiveness. It is therefore to be feared, that much of it lies yet unpurged from the throne, the senate, and inferior courts of justice, and also many great families in the land, whose forefathers were noted persecutors of the godly; yea, from the whole land, which is defiled thereby. In these, Christ himself hath been persecuted; "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Is not the Son of God also crucified a fresh among us, his blood trampled under foot, and counted an unholy thing? By the prostitution of the holy ordinance of the Supper, many are guilty of his body and blood; and, Oh! will not this plead against us in the day of visitation? The Jews madly said of old, "His blood be on us, and on our children;" and for near eighteen hundred years now they lie under that blood, and feel the effects of counting it unholy. Every sinner that rejects or denies him, joins issue in effect with the wicked Jews that cried, "Away with him, away with him; crucify him, crucify him." All unfaithful ministers of religion bring blood upon their own head; whence Paul tells the Elders at Ephesus, that he was free from the blood of all men, and assigns as the reason, that he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. Ezekiel is told, that if, in his character as a watchman, he neglected to warn the people, the blood of those that perished, thro' this neglect, would be required at his hand; which still holds of the watchman on Zion's walls, who must not be dumb, or greedy dogs, loving to slumber. Is there no guilt on our land in this respect?

Parents, masters, and magistrates are called, in their respective stations, to watch over the souls under their inspection, as they who must give account; and should they fail in this, they cannot be innocent. In fine, all impenitent, or obstinate sinners, are self-destroyers; "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." These too are guilty of murdering the souls of others, by their corrupt example, and fatal influence; and what havock do such make on one another in these lands? Would such lay this to heart, who are active and zealous in seducing others to the commission of iniquity, or instilling corrupt principles into their minds, they would act a very different part: for verily, they are treasuring up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of God's righteous judgment.

Such as harbour anger, resentment, malice and revenge; or indeed, who are destitute of love to their neighbour, or fellow men, are murderers in the sight of Heaven, and have their hands, in effect full of blood. Alas! how many are to be found of this description! The sixth precept of the moral law prohibits whatever tendeth to take away the life of our neigh-

hour unjustly. With this such are chargeable as deny them the means of subsistence, when in their power; or fix such a price on these, without necessity, as place them beyond their reach. All men, even enemies have such a claim upon us. Is not our land then full of blood, if myriads could be found among us, so void of humanity and the fear of God, as to wish a whole nation famished, or deprived of the means of subsistence, placing our hopes of success on the operation of the most dreadful of all outward evils? No wonder the voice of famine should be heard in our borders, when a wish so infernal could for a moment be harboured in our breasts. The Lord is righteous who taketh vengeance of such wicked inventions.

If we admit with some, that no authority on earth can make that capital, which the Author of life hath not made so, and for my part, I cannot help believing this to be the case; then all executions for theft, and other offences not pronounced meritorious of death in the word of God, are murderers in his sight, tho' under the forms and sanction of human laws. He never meant that the life of his creatures should be spilt with, no not the life even of a sparrow or a worm; and nothing can furnish a stronger proof of degeneracy than the extension of the penal code†. In corporal punishments, whether capital or not, respect is to be had to the human frame, the workmanship of God; which ought not in any case to be mangled, or abused. Where is the prince on earth that would tolerate the abuse, or mutilation even of his inanimate statue? and can we suppose that God will not resent the abuse often offered to his living images, these bodies of ours which he hath curiously framed‡? If the justice of the above remarks be admitted, what

† The Reader will find some strictures on this point in the Appendix, which could not conveniently be inserted here as a note.

‡ The following is the sentence lately pronounced on two state prisoners as the sentence of the law in the case of treason, ever since the time of Edward III. " You, and each of you, prisoners at the bar, are to be taken from the bar to the place from whence you came, and from thence to be drawn upon a hurdle to the place of execution, there to be hanged by the neck, but not till you are dead; for you are then to be taken down, your hearts to be cut out, and your bowels burned before your face, your heads and limbs severed from your bodies, and held up to public view, and your bodies shall remain at the disposal of his Majesty; and the Lord have mercy on your souls." Shocking as this sentence is, it includes something farther, that will not bear to be mentioned; and which, if not misinformed, has been sometimes literally executed. Common sense being judge, Is it not a disgrace to the Statute book, an outrage on human nature, and treason against its Author, a crime greater, perhaps, than it is meant to punish? Do such executions tend to beget an abhorrence of crime? The reverse is the case; they harden the heart, and make scenes of blood familiar, and its effusion little thought of. This was lately verified in France; for when the people's passions were agitated, and the restraints of law broken, they reacted the tragedies they had so often seen under the old despotic government. Both foreigners, and natives have observed, that a barbarous ferocity hath been often discovered at our public executions; which must be traced to something else than the native

guilt is contracted, and what blood lies on our land? for the great object of any government should be, to prevent, and not to punish crimes; to reclaim, and not destroy.

The crime of murder, in the case of Duels, is suffered to pass with impunity in these lands, by which they are stained with blood. The pleas usually urged, in vindication of this crime, vanish at the touch of reason, and dare not be offered at the bar of God. Without a peradventure, those who presume to acquit the guilty in such cases, make themselves amenable for their crimes in the sight of Heaven: for saith Solomon, "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord." This crime involves double guilt, the guilt of deliberate murder and suicide, whether the parties fall or not; and is often committed for the most trivial reasons; whence such heroes risk life wantonly, or die as a fool dieth, and those who acquit them are partakers of their sin. These are so many Popes in a Protestant country, who presume to pardon what God expressly requires should be punished with death: but verily, tho' they escape punishment from men, the Lord our God will not suffer such acquitted felons, or their judges, to escape his righteous judgment. In the Army, a strong temptation to this crime is presented, by attaching disgrace to the refusal of a challenge; but the blame devolves on those in power, who could easily make it as disgraceful to give or receive one, as it is at present thought, in certain cases, a punctilio of honour. He that saved the life of a Roman citizen was applauded; but he that with us attempts its destruction, without just cause, and wantonly exposes his own life, is reputed a man of honour. To desert his post is a coward's trick; and he is a poltroon in the eye of reason and of Heaven, who flies for shelter from the ills of life to self-destruction, or a brother's blood.

Every creature, is taught by instinct to consult its own preservation. "No murderer, saith an Apostle, hath eternal life abiding in him;" and self-murder is allowed to be, of all others, of the deepest die. This crime occurs, alas! not seldom in our isle†, and indicates the prevalence of infidelity, or of misery.

dispositions of the public. What gives a violent shock to our feelings, is repugnant to the law of nature, which is the law of justice; and I appeal to every one that reads or hears the above sentence, if it does not produce such an effect on his mind. Nature revolts at the idea of such a scene.

† The following extract was taken from one of our principal news-papers.
"There is one list from the last year, which we made out, and would almost wish to conceal from our readers—the list of Suicides, which amounted to upwards of fifty, that are mentioned in the papers. This crime of late years, has dreadfully increased, and is a strong proof that the sentiments and manners of the times are very little influenced by the precepts of religion."

hour unjustly. With this such are chargeable as deny them the means of subsistence, when in their power; or fix such a price on these, without necessity, as place them beyond their reach. All men, even enemies have such a claim upon us. Is not our land then full of blood, if myriads could be found among us, so void of humanity and the fear of God, as to wish a whole nation famished, or deprived of the means of subsistence, placing our hopes of success on the operation of the most dreadful of all outward evils? No wonder the voice of famine should be heard in our borders, when a wish so infernal could for a moment be harboured in our breasts. The Lord is righteous who taketh vengeance of such wicked inventions.

If we admit with some, that no authority on earth can make that capital, which the Author of life hath not made so, and for my part, I cannot help believing this to be the case; then all executions for theft, and other offences not pronounced meritorious of death in the word of God, are murders in his sight, tho' under the forms and sanction of human laws. He never meant that the life of his creatures should be spilt with, no not the life even of a sparrow or a worm; and nothing can furnish a stronger proof of degeneracy than the extension of the penal code. In corporal punishments, whether capital or not, respect is to be had to the human frame, the workmanship of God; which ought not in any case to be mangled, or abused. Where is the prince on earth that would tolerate the abuse, or mutilation even of his inanimate statue? and can we suppose that God will not resent the abuse often offered to his living images, these bodies of ours which he hath curiously framed? If the justice of the above remarks be admitted, what

[†] The Reader will find some strictures on this point in the Appendix, which could not conveniently be inserted here as a note.

[‡] The following is the sentence lately pronounced on two traitor prisoners as the sentence of the law in the case of treason, ever since the time of Edward III. " You, and each of you, prisoners at the bar, are to be taken from the bar to the place from whence you came, and from thence to be drawn upon a hurdle to the place of execution, there to be hanged by the neck, but not till you are dead; for you are then to be taken down, your hearts to be cut out, and your bowels burned before your face, your heads and limbs severed from your bodies, and held up to public view, and your bodies shall remain at the disposal of his Majesty; and the Lord have mercy on your souls." Shocking as this sentence is, it includes something farther, that will not bear to be mentioned; and which, if not misinformed, has been sometimes literally executed. Common sense being judge, Is it not a disgrace to the Statute book, an outrage on human nature, and treason against its Author, a crime greater, perhaps, than it is meant to punish? Do such executions tend to beget an abhorrence of crime? The reverse is the case; they harden the heart, and make scenes of blood familiar, and its effusion little thought of. This was lately verified in France; for when the people's passions were agitated, and the restraints of law broken, they reacted the tragedies they had so often seen under the old despotic government. Both foreigners, and natives have observed, that a barbarous ferocity hath been often discovered at our public executions; which must be traced to something else than the native

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guilt is contracted, and what blood lies on our land? for the great object of any government should be, to prevent, and not to punish crimes; to reclaim, and not destroy.

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As in the case of Duels, so also of murder, particularly Child-murder, pardon, or impunity is common: while the person who makes free to invade his neighbour's property, tho', perhaps, but to a small amount, must expire on a gibbet. In consequence of this, human life, even in its most tender and helpless stage, is denied the protection provided by the law of God, and the statutes of the state; or left exposed to the most imminent danger. Is not this in fact the case, when, in defiance of both, the worst of criminals, the deliberate murderers of their own innocent offspring, are, for a series of years back, acquitted; or, what amounts to an acquittal, only banished from the place where the horrid deed was perpetrated, and, consequently, infamy incurred, to a distant and more fertile spot, where the crime is unknown, and the criminal may commence the world a new, with all the advantages of a stranger? This is a crying iniquity, for which the land should mourn; for hereby much innocent blood is brought upon the nation, which God will require, when he makes inquisition for blood. Such conduct will then be the more awfully visited; because justice herself, in these cases, is perverted, and her voice disregarded. He that, foreseeing a murder, could prevent it, and yet neglects the means in his power for that purpose, is justly chargeable with the crime; and still more so, when, under the forms of justice, an official guardian of the law, instead of supporting, and executing its just sanction, does what in effect encourages the violation of it, by holding out the prospect of impunity. I hesitate not then to say, that the judge or jury, who acquit where condemnation, and a capital punishment ought to follow, having sufficient evidence of guilt, make themselves responsible to Heaven and society for that guilt, and are, in effect, more criminal than the very culprit. This is the verdict of reason, of equity, and common sense; and will be the verdict of the great and final Judge of all, however much it may be now disregarded. Such as can acquit in these cases, insult the laws of their Country, which adjudge such transgressors to death, as well as the law of God; insult also the community; trample on the dearest rights of human nature; offer a gross indignity to its Author; and are, in effect, enemies to their Country, and traitors to its best interests, by bringing innocent blood upon it; and so exposing to the Divine vengeance, which is, indeed challenged in such cases. This charge exceeds not what truth and justice will warrant, and is countenanced by the judgment of an eminent Lawyer^f of our own Country, who thus expresses himself, when pleading on the point, in his address to the Inquest or Jury: " Gentlemen, if one man had slain another, if a wo-

^f Sir George Mackenzie Advocate to king Charles II.

man had occasioned the death of her enemy, or any enemy had killed his opposer; even these criminals would have been capitally punished by the Cornelian law. But if this unhappy infant had been murdered by its own nurse, what punishment would this mother have demanded? With what cries and exclamations would she have stunned your ears? What shall we then say, when a woman, guilty of homicide, and a mother of the murder of her own child, has comprehended all these villainies in one single crime? A crime, in its own nature odious and detestable; in a woman prodigious, and in a mother incredible; and perpetrated against one, whose age did call for compassion, whose near relation demanded affection, and whose innocence might have deserved favour." It is an express law of Heaven, binding upon all in authority in every age, that he who sheddeth man's blood unjustly, by man shall his blood be shed; because he was formed in his Maker's image. To beget in the minds of men a dread of the crime of murder, the Mosaic law required that the very beast which gored a man, should be put to death. Let those who think lightly of the effusion of human blood, read the account, in the Twenty-first of Deuteronomy, of the rites prescribed in expiating uncertain murder, and say, if that land can be safe, where it is still remaining, in ten thousand instances, unexpiated, or not purged away. The guilt, and the danger accruing from it, cannot be less now, than under that dispensation, tho' little thought of by many.

Hath not our commercial intercourse, with the Eastern and Western parts of the world, brought much disgrace and blood on our land? If but the hundredth part of the evidence, produced in the late trial of a famous state culprit, be true, what horrid scenes have we acted in the East Indies, which Heaven cannot overlook in the day of retribution! The coast of Africa too, we have often drenched with the blood of its unoffending inhabitants, to gratify the claims of our insatiable avarice. The oppression, rapine, kid-napping and murder which we have committed in the Slave Trade alone, hath greatly augmented our national guilt, and come up as a memorial before God. On how many thousands of our Countrymen hath this vile traffic entailed misery and death! There is reason to suppose, that in one year, it produces more cruelty and guilt than

[†] The following extract is from a Scotch paper of December 1791. "If we look at the Slave Trade, in every point of view, it seems to be marked with the indignant visitation of Providence. By the evidence in the House of Commons it appears, that, from September 1784, to January 5, 1790, 350 slave-ships were returned in to the Custom-houses of Liverpool and Bristol; their original crews were 12,253 men, but of which returned home 5,750! The remainder perished! Thus hath it long been the grave of thousands of our best seamen. If to this melancholy catalogue are added the lives of the superior numbers of

the Revolution in a neighbouring nation, since its commencement, while the same reasons cannot be offered in alleviation. The violent death of a late unhappy Prince struck this and other nations with astonishment and horror, and was deemed by many a just cause for waging a war, that hath already sent a million prematurely to the grave. The concern we have felt and expressed at that deed, suppose it unjust and criminal in the extreme, serves to aggravate our own guilt, in sacrificing annually, without emotion, to our avarice and luxury, myriads of the human race, as good by nature as ourselves, and far less guilty in the sight of God. Excuse my recurring to this subject, for, in his Providence, our nation will be made to pay, with accumulated interest, all the sordid gain we have ever acquired in this infamous commerce. Our nation hath been often engaged in bloody and tedious wars; and have we not reason to fear, that these have not been always just and necessary on our part, and conducted without incurring guilt? For a century back, we have spent almost 48 years in a state of hostilities! The intervals of peace were scarcely of longer duration than till we were in case to commence or bear part in fresh contests. In the fatal war with our American colonies, what vast numbers were cut off on both sides! Not a few, who were once advocates for the justice of that war, have

unfortunate blacks sacrificed in the same space of time, imagination will shrink with horror from a scene that has too long been a blot upon the page of humanity." *Edinburgh Advertiser.*

¶ That unhappy contest cost the lives of near half a million of men, besides immense treasure. The present war, it is thought, has already sent prematurely into eternity double that number; and yet, the prospect of peace is unhappily placed at a distance. That these bloody contests could be more easily avoided, than terminated, there can be no doubt. The former of these wars, we have been often told, was protracted for near four years, after all hopes of securing its object were given up. Of how little account are the lives of men, in the political scale of nations! tho' one man, in the eye of reason and of Heaven, is of more value than the whole material world. During the current Century, we have already expended in war four hundred and twenty millions of money; and incurred a debt of about three hundred millions. How much human blood we have contracted, every drop of which must be accounted for, I leave Heaven, and the great day of the Lord to determine.

The last war between Russia and the Turks destroyed 130,000 Imperial soldiers, 200,000 Russians; the same number of Turks; in all 530,000. Add to this, the number of Russian and Turkish soldiers who died in the hospitals between the armistice and the definitive treaty of peace, computed at 110,000; of whom more than 40,000 were Russians. All these may be supposed to have been in the prime of life. All this waste of human blood was occasioned by the mad ambition of two despotic Monarchs, who possessed before much more territory than they could govern with propriety. What friend to humanity would not wish to see these bloody scenes terminated among men, and the nations disposed to live in peace with one another, that a few individuals may no more have it in their power to set them, at pleasure, by thousands, to slaughter each other, without personal animosity, or the least personal advantage in prospect?

If we have waged war with our Brethren, on the other side the Atlantick

since changed their opinion, and think its justice on their side, and of course, its injustice on ours, appears from this single circumstance, tho' no other plea could be urged, that our Legislature had decreed, that "they had a right to bind America in all cases whatsoever;" to oppose which unlimited claim, they had recourse to arms, when milder measures proved ineffectual; and thus obtained what we had denied to their prayers, yea, much more than they ever presumed to ask, till matters came to extremities. Even some of the servants of the Crown have of late publicly owned the folly and injustice of that disastrous war, which they branded, however, as the war of the people. If foolish and unjust, must not the consequences to us prove serious, when the Lord makes inquisition for the blood shed therein? and that he will make such inquisition, is as certain, whether we lay it to heart or not, as that he is true and faithful to his word, and unchangeable in his nature.

Many disputes, perhaps, at first trifling in their nature, that have cost the nation much blood, and immense treasure, might be amicably settled by arbitration, if between private individuals; and are we absolutely certain, that God will sustain the present bloody and disastrous contest, as just and necessary on our part, that when our conduct in it is weighed in his balance, it shall not be found wanting? His thoughts are not as our thoughts; for what is highly esteemed and applauded among men, is often an abomination in his sight. The evils of which it hath been, and may be farther productive, are incalculable. Should he who feeth not as man feeth, pronounce it both unjust and unnecessary, what a deluge of blood must be found in our skirts in the day of recompence, which may not be far distant||? Even in a just war, much guilt may be con-

without just cause, Providence hath chastised us, by making that bloody and unnatural struggle introductory to scenes at home, which have galled us not a little. Much as we dread and reprobate the late change and new order of things in France, we may trace in it the result of our own counsels and measures. It cannot be denied, that the Revolution in America hath had no small share in producing that change; and it is more than probable, and experience might teach us to foresee it, that our present interference will tend to produce other revolutions in Europe; whence we will do more to establish Republics in the earth than the writings of a thousand Paines, the operation of Jacobin principles, or the conquests of French arms. Thus men push on the very reverse of what they intend, and see the folly of their measures only when it is too late to remedy their effects, which hath been often verified. By obstinately refusing to reform existing abuses, these at length insure the destruction of the system that gave them birth and support; and in France pulled down this Dagon's temple, with the main pillars on which it rested, breaking them in pieces amidst the general shock. Every new war pushes things to such a crisis, as it necessarily increases the people's burdens, and lessens their ability to bear them.

|| We have been told that the Americans, when at war with us, had inscribed on the muzzle of their cannon, "O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise." Such application of Scripture must be con-

tracted, by the mode of conducting it. If the blood of Abel, a single individual, cried to God from the earth for vengeance

demned. It suggests this truth, however, that it is only in a just and necessary war Christians can consistently pray and hope for success. When it will be thought time to sheathe the bloody sword, and spare mankind, by terminating this "just and necessary," or, as some chuse to style it, "destructive and accursed war," which hath already destroyed more than a million of human creatures, who knows, save that adorable Being who sees the end from the beginning? for, even in this stage of its bloody progress, the words of an Apostle may be strictly applied, to all or either of the contending parties, "Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not."

Our judgment on any point, tho' not secure from error, must be formed on the evidence set before us, and correspond to its nature. The treaty of Pavia, which appeared in some of the papers, over which the Emperor presided, and to which the British cabinet is said to have acceded March 1792, shews that France was to be partitioned among the Allied belligerent powers, upon condition of their active co-operation, a particular district being allotted to each. If so, the very reverse, is too likely to be the consequence of that formidable coalition, which sprung rather from views of interest than of friendship. The prosecution of this plan, if we may credit some, was one ground of the war; but these grounds were as various, and assumed as many shapes as their success. The support of our good old Friends and Allies the Dutch—to prevent the free navigation of the Scheldt—the restoration of hereditary Monarchy and Nobility in France, and of the clergy to their livings, to which Popery must be appended, as appears from the late king's will, and the Proclamations of the Duke of Brunswick, and of their present pretended king—to avenge their late monarch's death—to support the Emigrants and Loyalists—to prevent the aggrandizement of the Republic, and the spread of their fraternizing principles—to secure indemnity for the past, and security for the future, are some of the reasons which have been assigned, at one time or other, for this "just and necessary war." And, acting confidently, we must now continue to fight till we have restored the balance of power, so much threatened by it. This however, we could see invaded, in the case of poor Poland, with apparent indifference, the partition of which, we have been told, formed one article in the treaty referred to above; and the guarantee of its plunder the subject of a subsequent treaty in Europe. The hallowed instrument in which the three-fold division of that ill-fated country is concluded on, begins thus: "In the name of the most holy and *undivided Trinity.*" Good God! how long shall sinful mortals dare profane thy sacred name, to sanction deeds black as hell? But because thou art "most holy," these deeds, or their authors and abettors shall receive a just recompence of reward. And, what was the object of the infamous treaty of Pilnitz?

After weighing all the alledged causes of this war, the Author is obliged to say, that he feels no conviction of its justice and necessity, leaving others the indisputable right of judging for themselves, and forming a different opinion, if they see cause. From its very commencement, he could not help dreading that Heaven, and our Allies and we were on opposite sides, that the acquisition of the Pope could not compensate for this disparity; and if he be allowed to be Antichrist, then, on the side he takes, the prince of the power of the air may be supposed to be found; whence, if there be any truth in these remarks, every lover of his King and Country, has cause to regret that we have unhappily got into such bad company, and are not likely soon to extricate ourselves.

Are not wars usually commenced by solemn appeals to Heaven, and victories attended with public thanksgivings? All this is becoming, when they are just and necessary, or merely defensive, and even then trembling should be joined to our mirth; and it should not be forgotten that he who girdeth on his harness ought not to boast, as he that putteth it off. But such appeals and thanksgivings furnish no proof of their justice and equity; for this practice is not novel or confined to Christians or Protestants. Heathens did the same; and the Court of Rome

on him that shed it, and was heard; what an awful voice hath the blood, perhaps of millions! I seem to hear their departed spirits address, with united voice, the Father of all, the Author of life, and avenger of wrong, How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt thou not avenge our wrongs, and our blood on them that dwell in yonder isle of the sea? Hath God no room to apply to us what he said to Cain, when his hands were stained with his Brother's blood? Ye Britons, what have ye done? the voice of your brethren's blood crieth to me from the ground, which hath opened her mouth to receive it from your hand; "when ye make many prayers, I will not hear, your hands are full of blood." Did God visit on the generation among whom Christ appeared all the innocent blood shed, from that of righteous Abel, to Zecharias, because they trode in the paths of their wicked forefathers? and may he not, in this respect, make us the generation of his wrath? Blood can be purged away only by blood; and to those who delight in war, or engage in it without absolute necessity, shall he, one time or other, give blood to drink, having found them worthy; whence, let Britain prepare to meet her God, in the habitation of his providence, in which his power and justice now appear.

Pride and carnal confidence have always proved pernicious both to communities and individuals. These, wherever they appear, are a symptom of deep degeneracy, and a prelude to approaching disgrace and misery. God is said to resist the

lebrated with public rejoicings, and a variety of pompous, religious ceremonies, the massacre of the Protestants at Paris in 1572, just as of late the court of Petersburgh in 1794 sang Te Deum for the burning of Warsaw, and massacre of Praga. Can we suppose that Heaven joins in these rejoicings? or rather, do they not afford triumph in the regions of darkness, to which the occasions of them are so near a kin? Satan was a murderer from the beginning, and in every war, since time began, on one side or other, if not often on both, he hath found employment suited to his nature, and by which his dominions have been more rapidly peopled than they could be in the ordinary course of things. When mankind in general shall become Christians indeed, for which happy event we still hope and pray, they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and learn the destructive art of war no more.

To what cruelties does that bloody system give birth, which in any other case would shock the most barbarous! Humane as our troops are reputed to be, we have been told that at the siege of Nimiguen, our soldiers tossed the French upon their bayonets. Of this circumstance Sir Richard Hill took notice in Parliament. A proclamation was lately issued in the West Indies, offering a handsome reward for the head of the Maroons, the original inhabitants. In this offer, women and children were included! Can any thing justify the murder of persons in cold blood, in consequence of a price fixed on their head? Even allowing this war to be just and necessary, are we innocent in the sight of God respecting the calamitous scenes at the evacuation of Toulon, Quiberon bay, and the interior of France? May not thousands of poor Emigrants curse the day we took them by the hand? Have we not placed them in situations, in which their death was morally certain? There is reason to suppose, that had it not been for the encouragement we held out to them, and the part they were

proud, and to know them afar off: but to give grace, or shew favour to the humble. He looks on every one that is proud, and brings him low: and treads down the wicked in their place. He scatters the proud in the imagination of their hearts, and exalts those of low degree; puts down the mighty from their seats, humbles the lofty looks of man, bows down the haughtiness of men; "for the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty; upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth." He levels mountains, and fills up vallies; raiseth the poor from the dung-hill, to set them among princes; and pours contempt upon princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth, when these are haughty, and rebel against him, their Lord and Sovereign. In such terms does he reprobate in his word a temper so unbecoming dependent creatures; and such things does he perform in the course of his providence, that no flesh might glory in his presence.

Our nation hath been long noted for pride and haughtiness, which hath often plunged us in great calamities. Among all ranks, pride discovers itself in dress, in furniture, in the provision of the table, and, with many, in outward pomp and equipage. "Pride, saith Solomon, goeth before destruction: and an haughty spirit before a fall." This lost us the allegiance of America, and brought upon us, same time, the vengeance of the half of Europe. Hath not this been sometimes displayed in the Cabinet and Senate, and marked even the amusements of the people? Does it not often utter high swelling words of vanity in the vehicles of public intelligence, and appear conspicuous on occasions of public rejoicings? What gasconading! as if it were Britain's prerogative to ride on the whirlwind, to preside over the storm and tempest, and command the troubled waves of the sea, as our own element, which we affect to rule, into an instant calm! As pride goes before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall; "so before honour is humility," which we have as a nation yet to learn. Jehovah, and not Britain, rules the waves, as the great Lord of both sea and land; and when he blows with his winds, he can easily make our strongest ships of war, these boasted, wooden walls of our isle, to sink as lead amidst the mighty waters.

induced to act in consequence of it, they might have long ago been reconciled to their country; and many of them would doubtless not have deserted it—Should God find in our skirts all the blood shed in this unhappy contest, and none can be absolutely certain but this may be the case, this will prove a more serious load than our national debt, enormous as that is.

S What pride, vanity and self-confidence, if not insolence, and defiance of the Lord appear in the names that are given to ships of war, which either are, or have been in the British navy! such as,—The Irresistible—Powerful,—Victory,

The detestable vice of Drunkenness, so prevalent in our isle, ought not to be passed over in silence. This vice increases the number of transgressors, and of the poor and miserable among men. The guilt of intoxication is the greater, that no man can be overtaken with it by surprise. He who voluntarily resigns or destroys his reason, is, in effect, guilty of all that evil to which he is thereby exposed. The only difference betwixt the man who takes a dose of arsenic into his stomach, knowing it to be such, and the person who is habitually drunk, is, that the former dispatches himself suddenly, the latter by a slow poison: for both are chargeable with suicide. This odious vice infects many of all ranks, ages, sexes and conditions. Not a few of our youth of fashion fall a sacrifice to it before they have well reached the years of manhood; or are so much under its power, that their life becomes useless to themselves, and a nuisance to society. To the Altar itself it makes its unhallowed approaches; for if all in the sacred office "that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink," were to meet the fate of Nadab and Abihu, the vacancies in the church from year to year would greatly increase. It is threatened that "the drunkards of Ephraim should be trodden under feet;" and both the priest and the prophet are said

---Dreadnought---Superb---Terror---Thunder---Lightning---Thunderer---Glory---Triumph---Formidable---Invincible---Impregnable---Nonsuch---Defiance---Tremendous---Vengeance---Ariel---i. e., the Altar, Light, or Lion of God---and Providence; a term often used to denote God himself, and always his administration of the world !!

The least reflection may shew the impropriety of these vain and pompous titles, as given to frail vessels, which are every moment, when at sea, at the mercy of the winds and waves, should he who holds the one in his fists, and sits as King upon the other, but give them commission to act as the ministers of his wrath. In these and the like things, the genius of a people appears as well as in matters of greater moment. And of a kin to this are our carnal rejoicings, and glorying in the arm of flesh, when Providence is pleased to make our fleets more or less successful; and also our vain gasconading, respecting the wonders they can achieve: "Let Britain attend to her navy and she hath nothing to fear,—she may set the world at defiance—with a navy in the finest state of discipline and harmony, what advantages ought we to expect?"—Were our enemies double their present number, there is no doubt but the Tars of Old-England would give a good account of them. Nature has given us those impregnable, wooden walls, which all their united force can never surmount—England is in a condition to sweep the Russian flag from the ocean, or that of any power that may enter into the ambitious schemes of this heroine." Such language is copied verbatim from our public papers, and much more of the same nature hath often appeared. Is it not insulting to the Lord of hosts, whose is the battle, and not man's? When men substitute any thing in his place, and rest upon it as the prop of their trust and confidence, is it not just with him to destroy that idol of jealousy? The most direct way to bring the British navy to ruin, is to boast of it as our defence, or, pardon the expression, to rely upon it as our god-our refuge, and strength, and very present help in the day of danger and trouble. Let not the strong glory in their strength, the wise in their wisdom,

to have erred thro' strong drink. However innocent, or even reputable some may account this crime, those who indulge to it are in scripture classed with the chief of sinners, and threatened also with their doom: "Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor drunkards shall inherit the kingdom of God." When men of rank and fortune debase themselves by this vice, and presume, in defiance of the law of God, and the duties of their station, to give way to the commission of it even on the Lord's day, how atrocious the guilt, and pernicious the example! "Blessed art thou, O land, said Solomon, when thy princes eat in due season, for strength and not for drunkenness;" and may we not reverse it! Wo to thee, O land, when thy princes eat and drink out of season, for excess and dissipation. Not few have met their dismal fate, like that wicked prince Amnon, while their heart was "merry with wine;" being cut off either by a violent death, or the native effect of their intemperance and debauch.

"Who hath wo? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixt wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, stingeth like an adder. For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty; and drowsiness shall clothe such men with rags." While such amuse themselves with noisy mirth, and the songs of the drunkard, yea, often with execrable oaths, and other unhallowed freedoms of speech; perhaps their poor children at home

nor the rich and prosperous in their wealth, trade and commerce; but let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth.

† The Public have been told, some time ago, that a club was instituted, under royal auspices, in the metropolis of the nation, styled the "Magnum Bonum Club," and had its stated times of meeting on the Lord's day evening. The great bottle had a label, with this inscription from Shakespeare,

"I'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart;"
to which the Chairman gave, as an apposite toast;

"Curse on him who first cries hold!—enough."

Such conduct in any, merits the most severe animadversion; but in persons of high rank and prospects, forfeits every distinction of birth, and, while it must degrade them in the eyes of wise and virtuous men, whose good opinion they have no right to despise, marks them out as foes to God, and ripe for his judgments. Intoxication, by whomsoever countenanced or indulged, is not a royal, but a beastly vice; for it unites in one degraded mortal a brute and a devil, of which the former is the most conspicuous. "Whoredom, and wine take away the heart." "My son, give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings. It is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink: lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted."

I recollect an anecdote of a dog that was taught to drink spirits, in order to entertain company with his gambols, and unnatural gestures and cries. But one

are crying for a morsel of bread, while the afflicted mother is unable to satisfy their cravings. Thus many a man brings infamy on his own character, ruin on his family, and loss to others; while, perhaps, murder, the gallows and hell itself close the gloomy scene. That the prevalence of this vice in our land, with all our religious advantages and profession, will weigh with Heaven in the day of retribution, there cannot be a moment's doubt. "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." How suitable the exhortation? and by what a powerful motive is it enforced?

The profanation of the great and venerable name of God is an evil that prevails in various ways among us in these sinful lands. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" is a precept of that law to which every individual owes unlimited obedience. The reason added to enforce this duty is, "for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain;" that is, he will hold him exceeding guilty, and punish his impiety in the most exemplary manner, if he do not repent. To the vice of swearing in common conversation there can be little temptation; and it is always a certain proof of a heart void of the fear of God, yea, an invariable mark of a child of the devil. Many among all ranks are more or less tainted with this accursed evil, the sacred profession not excepted; and hence, even children often appear early proficients in this diabolic art. In our armies and navies this vice assumes her most Heavendaring forms, as if the service of an earthly prince could confer a right to pour contempt on the sacred Majesty of the universe. Those that command in both, instead of exerting their authority to restrain from this criminal practice, too often set the fatal example; whence they have much to account for. Tho' the sword may devour the virtuous as well as the wicked; yet, is there not reason to fear that many thousands of our Countrymen, since present hostilities commenced, have their mouths to-day filled with earth and worms, who often opened them in horrid oaths and imprecations; while now their immortal spirits know and feel what it is to insult the Eternal God, and rush upon the thick booses of his buckler? No wonder he should leave them to flee or fall before their enemies; or, as the prophet expresses himself, "give them as the dust to their

day happening, in this situation, to overset a kettle full of boiling water, with which he scalded himself, all the wit of man could not prevail with him to drink a drop of spirits afterwards. How few of the human race act with such propriety as this brute animal! for having once contracted the debasing habit of drunkenness, seldom do they reform, tho' every thing that should be dear to a rational creature is at stake.

sword, and as driven stubble to their bow." Are not our ships of war, in consequence of this and other vices, like so many little floating hells, constantly belching out oaths, blasphemies, and imprecations, calling upon God to damn themselves and one another, tho' their damnation slumbereth not in its approach. Apostate fiends dare not so profane the name of God; for "they believe and tremble" at the prospect of the full execution of his vengeance, which constrains them to address their future Judge, "Torment us not before the time." How amazing the forbearance of God, that he should permit so many profane rebels to ride safely on the surface of that element, upon which he sits as King! He indeed sometimes sends forth his winds out of his treasures, with a dread commission to toss them like a ball on the face of the billows, or to sink them like lead to the bottom of the ocean; whence they often find a sudden transition to the shades of death, the bar of God, and, dying in their sins, to the depths of hell. Of such events we not seldom hear, but there is a time coming when God will plead with such daring sinners, on the element they deem their own, in a manner still more awfully expressive of his power, majesty and justice.

Is it not a species of perjury to subscribe to articles of faith which are not believed, and engage, by solemn promises, to perform certain duties, while the subsequent conduct runs counter to both? Can this be less offensive to God, or less hurtful to the interest of society, because committed under the venerable shade of religion, by those who are reputed his servants, and claim the character? Those who are in the least acquainted with the state of religion in Britain, cannot be ignorant that this is lamentably the case: but tho' this kind of perjury escape punishment among men, it will not escape the righteous judgment of God.

And is it not to be feared, that what our own laws term Perjury, and punish as such, too universally prevails in our land; the declaring upon oath that to be true, and consistent with the juror's knowledge, while he knows it to be false; or concealing what he hath solemnly engaged to declare. An appeal to God in such cases, is a virtual renunciation of his help, amidst the trials of life, and of the hope of future felicity. This daring crime deliberately insults his omniscience, forfeits and renounces his favour, defies the terrors of his retributive justice, and also affects society, in respect to character, property and life. Much guilt may be incurred by the mode both of administering and taking an oath, when done without becoming reverence for God, and a single eye to his glory. "Thou shalt swear in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness," is the Divine direction on this head; which however, is too seldom respected. The mode of administering oaths in courts of justice, and else-

where, and also of taking them, is highly culpable; for it is difficult to determine who is most irreverent, the person who tenders, or he who makes oath. Hence it hath become a proverb, "It is but a custom-house oath." Like the mark of the beast, this is made the qualifying test for selling and citizenship in many places.

On this point, a certain well known author, in a sermon on the Third commandment, expresses himself in the following manner:—"With respect to the sin of Perjury, I fear, we are worse than any nation now under the sun, perhaps worse than any the sun ever saw. I am afraid there are more daring instances of this wickedness amongst us, than in all the rest of Europe. By an unhappy kind of necessity it is interwoven, as it were, with the very constitution of the body politic, and diffuses itself like a deadly contagion amongst all orders and ranks of people. Oaths are excessively multiplied, and so generally neglected, that it is equally difficult and rare, for a person to engage for a course of years, in any kind of employment, either civil or commercial, without being ensnared. Some are so expressed, that it is morally impossible to comply with them; others so circumstanced, that they are usually swallowed without the remotest design of regarding them either in whole or in part. Tho' wickedness of every kind too much abounds amongst us, Perjury is, perhaps, peculiarly and eminently our national sin; and I tremble to think it is so; for it gives too just a ground to fear the approach of national judgments. It cannot but be grievous to every serious mind, to observe, the little reverence and solemnity, or rather the total want of common decency, which too frequently prevails among us, while appealing to God by this sacred rite, so that sometimes it is not easy to say, whether those who tender the oath, or those who take it, seem least in earnest. Without doubt, this indifference may be assigned as one cause of the increase and prevalence of perjury. Surely all who have any regard for the honour of God---any sense of the worth of souls, will pray earnestly that this iniquity may not be our ruin, but that the Lord would be pleased to inspire and succeed the most proper means for the removal, or at least the mitigation of this evil.

Are solemn appeals to Deity thus trifled with among us, and both multiplied and administered without apparent necessity? Have we as a nation once incurred the awful guilt of adding to perjury insult of Deity*? Can we suppose the Lord will

* Does not this nation lie under the enormous guilt of universal Perjury, and open insult to that God to whom our vows and oaths should be performed? Have we not, in the most public and solemn manner, engaged to be the Lord's, and all ranks, in their place and station, to watch against defection from his ways, both in principle and practice, and to adhere to, and maintain the attained

hold a people guiltless who in such aggravated forms take his sacred name in vain? When he enters into judgment these

reformation to the utmost of their power, studying to improve this in Church and State? What was the result? Why, so far from fulfilling such solemn engagements, or lamenting any defects that might attend the manner or matter of their oath, their recorded promises, by which they had bound themselves in the sight of Heaven, were adjudged to the flames, and publicly burnt by the hands of the common executioner, while the impious ceremony was celebrated with profane shoutings, intemperance and carnal rejoicings!! Many still justify this impious deed, or treat it very lightly.

Had our forefathers been convinced, upon mature reflexion, that they had bound themselves by oath to what was wrong in itself, or sinned in the mode or matter of their engagement, instead of such conduct, fraught with-impiety, and gross insult to the Majesty of Heaven, the whole land should have confessed their guilt, and deprecated the Divine displeasure. Without entering in the least into the merits of the question, respecting the moral obligation of these solemn and voluntary ties upon Posterity, voluntary at least in regard of the rulers and leading-men in the nation, the manner of treating them referred to above, must have been highly offensive to God, to whom it belongs to repay such deeds, and must have also entailed much guilt on this nation, which will not be overlooked in the day of visitation; because we have never publicly repented of that deed, if we may not except some Christians, who still own its obligation and profess their sorrow for the sin of the nation in that affair. Was it ever known that a people so treated their own public vows to their gods? If the present generation have no concern in the obligation of that deed, certain I am we have a deep interest in the guilt contracted in consequence of it, its duty or expediency altogether out of the question: for God is jealous of his honour where his creatures invoke his name, appeal to his omniscience and justice, and interpose his authority. On that occasion myriads dissembled with God and man, prefacing perjury with hypocrisy. Have we no reason to fear, that because of such swearing and such a mode of treating their oaths, the Land may yet mourn? "God will not be mocked!"

What would we think of the Legislature of a neighbouring nation, did they decree that all the oaths they have publicly sworn, since the commencement of their Revolution, should be engrossed in a book, and that book burned in the most public manner, with every studied mark of contempt, and testimony of public rejoicings, without having once expressed their sorrow for it at any subsequent period? Would not this go far to confirm their character as irreligious and atheistical, and give, perhaps, more just ground of reproaching them than any thing that hath yet occurred among them? Let us not be partial to ourselves, but let every Briton make the application, and believe God is no respecter of persons. In the awful fate of their late unhappy monarch, God's displeasure at the horrid crime of perjury may perhaps be traced. No doubt, the innocent blood of myriads, entailed for ages on his throne, whose remains were treated with every indignity, came then in remembrance before God; because, instead of professing his sorrow on this account, and renouncing the bloody system that caused its effusion, he in a manner testified his acquiescence in their murder, by professing to the last his adherence to the corrupt and sanguinary religion of Rome, only expressing his regret for having sanctioned some decrees against it, and his firm purpose, if spared, to make ample amends for this, by exerting himself to restore that religion, and its public ministers to their former power and splendor, all which he solemnly declared in his last will, when he may be supposed to have spoken the genuine dictates of his heart. Yet was it the crime of Perjury which seems to have filled up his cup, and provoked God to abandon him into the hands of his enraged subjects; for it will not deny that he repeatedly, and in the most solemn and public manner, wore to maintain a constitution, which, there is too much reason to believe, he was at the same time attempting to undermine, and overthrow, and listening to the proposals

lands shall doubtless know how heinous such a conduct is in his sight. King Zedekiah found so to his cost, when he presumed to think, with some of that character since, that princes ought not to be slaves to their word, or even their oath, any farther than they apprehend this to be conducive to their interest. Hear what the Lord himself saith respecting the crime and the punishment of that unhappy prince: "Seeing he despised the oath, by breaking the covenant, (when lo, he had given his hand) and hath done all these things, he shall not escape. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompence upon his own head. And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespasses that he hath trespassed against me. And all his fugitives, with all his bands, shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered towards all winds: and ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken it." Zedekiah could plead that the oath was imposed by a conqueror and a heathen; yet God owns it as his oath and covenant, because he was appealed to as witness and Judge, whence he avenged its violation. If lawful in itself, the case would be the same tho' imposed by his own subjects; whence we ought to justify and adore the ways of Providence, in bringing to an untimely end a late unhappy prince, who cannot be acquitted of this crime, whatever blame may be due to the instruments of his fall. Who does not perceive in the above passage of holy writ, a striking correspondence to what befel the prince referred to, and the adherents to his cause; with this difference, that the king of Judah and his connections fell a sacrifice to the just resentment of a foreign monarch, but the latter met his fate by the hands of his own subjects. If the God of heaven, the King of kings, hath thus awfully avenged the crime of perjury even upon crowned

of other powers for that purpose. May not all this be justly inferred, from his having afterwards disavowed with his own hand all that he did to sanction it? Can any state policy, or pretended necessity of his affairs justify such dissimulation with God, and a great nation, as some have alledged? Was it not for the vindication of Providence in his afflictions, and benefiting the living, by pointing out the fatal fruits of a crime so prevalent among us, these remarks would be spared; tho' impartial posterity will feel little delicacy on the head. It is however to be hoped that his trials were not in vain, and indeed his death was more dignified than his life, for God may shew mercy while he takes vengeance on our inventions. In various ways does he mark sin in its punishment. It has been remarked that the massacres in Paris, on the noted 2d and 3d of September corresponded exactly in point of date with the bloody St. Bartholomew's in 1592, allowing for the difference of stile; and the blood then shed remained to be purged by blood. It would seem as if the crimes of the first mentioned day were awfully remembered on its return; for the coincidence of date was not casual, in respect of him who rules in the kingdoms of men, and will not suffer sin, particularly persecution and murder, to pass unpunished.

heads, will he suffer the inhabitants of Britain, where it so much abounds, to pass with impunity? Verily not: for on this account the land shall be made to mourn.

We are justified in viewing Corruption, Venality and Bribery as the procuring cause of national judgments, wherever they prevail; for these have sapped the prosperity, and insured the ruin of once powerful states. To this source may be traced the decline and downfal of the Roman empire, once the boasted mistress of the world. When men, possessing no fixed principles of honour, virtue, or religion, live in a style of expenditure beyond what their stated income will bear, to what expedients will they not have recourse, in order to support their extravagance, and what line of conduct so base and flagitious but they will adopt, provided a proper temptation presents itself? When this venal and base spirit is not confined to those, who can plead poverty and the meanness of their education in excuse, but pervades every order and rank in society, those in the sacred office not excepted; does not this afford a sad proof of the general depravity of morals, and a dread presage of impending ruin? Immense fortunes are not always suddenly acquired by fair and honourable means. The sacred writers tell us, "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent; they that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition; the love of money is the root of all evil." The enormous scenes of peculation brought to light by the impeachment of a late state pannel, if any credit be due to the evidence adduced in support of it, too plainly speak the prevalence of this vice. And hath not this brought disgrace and odium on the British name abroad, in the eyes of the oppressed and injured natives, whose sufferings and wrongs claim redress from the Judge of all, who will not fail to recompence them.

And hath not the evidence produced on some trials, in the case of contested elections, presented a picture of burgh-politics, degrading to human nature, and, considering the frequency of such practices, awfully foreboding to the Community? But these are deeds of darkness, which cannot bear the light; and therefore cautiously avoid it, whence the instances detected are probably few to those which escape public animadversion. As corruption, so its offspring perjury lamentably prevails on such occasions; for every voter either takes, or, in case of a disputed election, can be obliged to take four different oaths; which are too often tendered and taken with little reverence. Corruption and bribery, these degrading auxiliaries of subverted or abused power, are at the root of public grievances, and threaten the very existence of liberty, and of every thing valuable in the

Constitution of our Country: yet not a few would justify all this under the softened appellation of necessary influence. The prevalence of this vice is sufficient to excite painful fears in the breast of every one that fears God, and loves his country, and fellow men; for while it gradually works its own punishment, it doubtless exposes to the judgments of the Almighty. Hear his charge against his ancient people on this very head: " Truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin. Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money, yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest." Should we imitate them in these and other criminal practices, what right have we to expect the continuance of prosperity, or to think that God will violate the order of his government in favour of our presumption? In what he addressed to the Jews, we may see an indispensable condition of our continued prosperity; " Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow!" Without this, tho' "the tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God be secure;" yet "the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery," when the day of visitation from the Almighty is come.

The vice of Impurity, as opposed to chastity of disposition and manners, is highly offensive to God, pernicious to society, and destructive of the morals, health and souls of individuals. It is threatened, " Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." This vice pollutes the temples of the Holy Ghost; for such the bodies of professing Christians are, or ought to be: but indeed, they are no Christians that are stained therewith. That this sin abounds, among all descriptions of men, innumerable circumstances make but too manifest. Its fatal influence and horrid ravages are not confined to the unmarried, or the lower ranks in society, but pollute the streams of lawful wedlock, and overrun the more polite circles in life. A late noted Historian observes, in reference to the prevalence of this vice in these lands; " Among the higher ranks in life, conjugal fidelity is very little

regarded;” and is there not reason to fear, from the many prosecutions for adultery of late, and other circumstances, that there is too much truth in the remark? If any of that description dissipate princely fortunes, is it by works of faith and labours of love, that lay a good foundation for the time to come; or by such deeds as cannot endure the light, and treasure up wrath against the day of wrath? Abimelech king of Gerar, tho’ a heathen, discovered his dread and abhorrence of this crime, in what he said to Abraham respecting his wife; “What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin?” and said Joseph, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”

Hath not this abominable vice occasioned the destruction of many once famous states and individuals? and can we suppose, it will not be punished in our nation? “This was the iniquity of Sodom, Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her, and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.” An apostle thus describes their character and fate, “even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” What misery did this sin bring on the Shechemites, on the children of Israel in the wilderness, and in the affair of the Levite’s concubine, as well as on many individuals? From the severe censures of it by the prophets, and threatenings against it, we have reason to believe, it had no inconsiderable share in bringing the greatest calamities on the Jewish nation, and in the dissolution of their state at length. “How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me; when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots houses. They were as fed horses in the morning; every one neighed after his neighbour’s wife. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” The Spirit of God here uses a figure that some in their wisdom would term indelicate; but vile sins cannot be alluded to and exposed by delicate similes. “Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation,” that is, on the Jews and any other nation that resembles them in guilt. To the above charge and threatening is subjoined, “Go ye upon her walls, and destroy; take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord’s; which Britain should hear, and stand in awe of so offending, lest this be realized upon her.

† The late Principal Robertson in his History of Scotland.

The leprosy of this sin pollutes the lips of many; and wherever they go, like the snail, they leave their slime behind them. By their smutty allusions, and obscene jests, the opening of their mouth is like an unripe sepulchre, which sends forth a noisome stench, and presents its loathsome and putrified contents to the horror of the beholder. These think often to entertain by what would be characteristic in the menial of a brothel, as if it were an accomplishment in a gentleman to have served an apprenticeship in the stews; not content without proclaiming to all, with whom they may happen to associate, whose they are and whom they serve. Is it not to be feared that our large towns, in consequence of this vice, are become sinks of impurity, where scenes of lewdness are exhibited before the pure eye of Heaven, in forms not to be described? These are indeed, works of darkness which cannot bear the light; yet are they naked and open to the all-seeing, and ever-waking eye of God, who is of purer eyes than to look on sin of any kind but with abhorrence and detestation: nor are the perpetrators of these deeds of night always careful to conceal them even from their fellow creatures, as if they gloried in their shame, and minded only the gratification of their brutal appetites. If fame be true, the metropolis of our nation is notorious for the practice of this detestable vice, even in her most criminal and debasing forms. There, we are told, her votaries of both sexes have their places of public rendezvous, whither they resort for the purpose of forming mutual assignations; and the real object of such interviews is no secret. Thus, unashamed of their vile

[†] The Author has been told, that the mention of the above circumstance from the pulpit, as a proof of the too general depravity of morals, gave offence to some, particularly of the female sex, as if indelicate and impertinent, if not false and groundless. Would to Heaven that the latter were indeed the case. Tho' the Author was assured of the circumstance as a fact, by a Gentleman of veracity, who had of late spent some time in the metropolis, yet he made farther inquiry, and finds the fact to be too well ascertained. The Persons at whom he inquired, who had ocular proof of the fact, declared that it is no unusual thing there, to see thousands of females assembled, in certain places, all dressed in the most elegant style, who are well known by their gait, manner, and attire; that gentlemen resort thither, survey on horse-back thro' their glasses this assemblage of beauty and fashion, while they pass as in review before them, to expose to advantage their charms. Having selected their object, they dismount, give their horse to their servant, take the fair one by the arm, and, after two or three turns, retire to places provided for the accommodation of such, which abound in the neighbourhood of all these places of public resort. All this is transacted in open day, and before thousands of spectators, nor are the married, and even aged of the male sex, ashamed to be seen acting their part in these odious scenes. All this is asserted to be so common there, that it is nothing thought of, tho' strangers are invited to view it as a novelty, one of the strange phenomenon of that large and wicked city.

Are not these things to be lamented? and do they not furnish ground of serious apprehension? The offence taken at the reference to them above, is

conduct, they proclaim their sin as Sodom, and hide it not; and since a resemblance to the devoted cities of the plain, in the nature and impudence of their crimes, may be easily traced among us, would it not be just with God, especially considering

language neither indelicate, nor too explicit, led to be so particular on such a hateful subject. If the bare mention of this gave offence to some, how offensive to God to witness it from time to time, with all its aggravating circumstances! Instead of cavilling at the mention of such things, those who hate sin on its own account, and feel for the insults offered to God thereby, will lament they should ever exist among us. None have more cause to do so, than the virtuous part of the female sex; for, in consequence of such scenes, thousands of the other sex are become such obscene birds as shun clean provision, while they fly with avidity at every carrion. The many prosecutions of late for Crim. Con. or adultery, shew that our women of rank are not all Lucretias, that the female part of the nation bears pace with the male in proficiency in vice. Let the British dames attend to what the Spirit of God hath said to the fine ladies in ancient Israel, when describing the vanity of their dress and the levity of their carriage; "Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will discover their secret parts. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell, there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle, a rent; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and instead of a stomacher, a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty."

He acts not the part of an enemy to the sex who laments and exposes such enormities, by which the virtuous among them suffer in their dearest concerns. No vice can be reproved without being mentioned, nor confessed and lamented, if it is not known to exist; and the mention of these things in public is not pleasant, but painful to a feeling, and virtuous heart. We shall be to them who borrow fire from God's altar to enflame their corrupt passions, at the mention of vices for which they should mourn. And should any condemn the reprehension of vice, from an affected modesty, under which the basest passions sometimes lurk, the censure retorts with double severity on themselves.

A circumstance was mentioned in the body of this Discourse at delivery, to which a place is here given, namely, That within the precincts of one parish in the city of London, no fewer than 500 houses of bad fame have been known to exist many years ago; and if so, there is reason to fear their number is not since diminished. The Author recollects to have seen this asserted in a paper, written by a London gentleman, on the institution of the Magdalen hospital, which is inserted, if he remembers well, in a London magazine. In that paper, a number of other things occur, which tend to justify the view given above of the dissolute manners of too many in the metropolis. The wickedness of this city, where iniquity of every kind aboundeth, far exceeds what the mind of man can conceive, or the tongue of an angel describe. The sins that brought a deluge of liquid fire from Heaven on the once wealthy but voluptuous cities of the plain, setting them forth as an awful example of Divine vengeance, are to be found there with peculiar aggravations, in addition to other horrid sins more eminently our own. We should therefore view and lament them as offensive to God, and a mean of procuring national judgments; for it is doubtless his determined purpose to punish them in an exemplary manner, tho' he hath long suspended the deserved stroke, for the sake of that small remnant which he hath preserved from the general contagion. O London! London! if the Lord visit thee not with judgments as conspicuous as thy guilt, "he hath forsaken the earth, and seeth it not;" whence prepare to meet thy God, to whom it belongeth to take vengeance of such inventions! Once he scourged thee with a destructive plague, and a consuming fire, and he hath many such arrows in his quiver, with which he can easily humble the proudest city on earth. Tho' sentence against the evil works of men be not speedily executed, let not their hearts be let in them to do evil; for with him a thousand years are as one day.

the superior advantages of our nation, to punish such crimes by judgments equally awful and expressive of his displeasure? Does not their abhorrence of this crime daily decrease, so that many glory in their shame, and would recommend themselves to the attention or admiration of the gay and thoughtless of both sexes, by the number of their debasing conquests, and the address of their criminal intrigues? These give diligence to make their own damnation sure--to work it out, tho' at the expence of occasional fear and trembling, as a pledge and earnest of the worm that shall never die, and the fire which shall not be quenched.

Does not this abominable vice entail disgrace, guilt and misery on too many in our Fleets† and Armies? whence God

† The Public have been informed, thro' the channel of our news papers, that when our Fleet was under failing orders at the time of the Spanish Armament, no fewer than several thousand women of bad fame were set on shore at Spithead;—and also, that when the Royal George went to the bottom, the number of worthless females on board came little short of, if it did not exceed the number of the males. Neither the one account, nor the other was contradicted, which they ought to be, if false. Is it unworthy of a Christian to recollect such awful events, and trace the moral connexion of cause and effect in them? “Who so is wise, will observe these things: But because they regard not the work of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.” The impure are cursed.

Admit the truth of the above, and what a sad picture of the profligacy of our seamen, and of the criminal connivance of their superiors! What a melancholy situation! to be plunged in an instant into all the horrors of eternity amidst such company; and was it not just in God to arrest them suddenly, while they presumed to offend after such a manner, and set his authority and the terrors of his wrath at defiance? But, alas, how few of their surviving brethren have profited by the awful warning!

Can we extol these as the ornament, the defence, and bulwark of our isle, in point of true honour, virtue and piety? Do those that bear command in our fleets and armies set the example of reverence for the name, the day and laws of God? With what consistency can they punish disrespect to their own person, or disobedience to their orders, if they themselves are seen, heard and known to contemn the highest authority in the universe? These two precepts, “Fear God and honour the king” should never be separated in practice; for the first is doubtless prior, in point of obligation and importance; and the latter cannot exist without its observance. How can that man be loyal to his prince, and a real friend to his country, however noisy his professions of loyalty and patriotism, who is blind to his own chief concern, and an enemy and traitor to his God? If such enemies and traitors abound among the defenders of our isle, is it any wonder God should write disappointment on every hostile scheme and enterprize in which we engage? When a people walk contrary to God, he will walk contrary to them; but when their ways please him, he causes their enemies to be at peace with them, or gives them as dust to their sword.

The sins that abound in our land, and among our seamen and soldiers, are much more to be dreaded than all the forces of our enemies, formidable as these are; for they make God our foe, and provoke him to take part with those that fight against us. Dr. Diodridge concludes his remarks, in his Family Expositor, on the pious Centurion who applied to our Lord in behalf of his distressed servant, as recorded Luke vii. 2, 3. with this observation, “Such may our officers be! and we may hope, that the hosts of heaven will with pleasure cover their heads in the day of battle, and obedient troops be formed, by their example and care, to the discipline of virtue as well as of war.”

may justly realize, with respect to the former, what is said to take place when "the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea." Commentators understand this of places that boast of their insular situation, and maritime strength and advantages; and what place more likely in this respect than our sea-girt isle, whose boasted rampart is the ocean? For the sins of the nation, and for the daring impiety, and debasing vices which abound in our Navy, have we not reason to dread the effects of the effusion of the vial of his wrath upon that very element which we so often proudly call our own---that even there, the God of heaven may yet stain the pride of Britain's glory, and avenge the insults we daily offer his sacred Majesty on the mighty Ocean, which owns and obeys him as sovereign Lord? "He will smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." The Lord charged his people of old, "When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing;" which respects not only the people at large, but also the men of war. Do not both with us however, especially the latter, act on such serious occasions, as if the precept were reversed; When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then freely indulge in every wicked thing? "Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked." "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

The friendly disposition that hath, for some time past, been publicly shewn to Popery, that Antichristian system, merits particular attention, as highly offensive to God, quite inconsistent with our profession as Protestants, and drawing after it a train of serious consequences. Hereby that system hath gained a more firm footing in these lands, than ever it did during the unhappy reign of the Stewart family, with all their violent struggles to introduce and establish it. No-doubt, there is too much of the spirit and leaven of Popery in every Christian community in the nation, and indeed, in every heart; for sparing and cherishing which, the Lord may not spare us in the day when he enters into judgment. Many of the doctrines of that system are very fashionable; and in the usual mode of conducting church matters, its spirit and essence are retained and exemplified. The much admired union of church and state is like the foundation and chief-corner stone of the fabric, and constitutes the basis on which refts his Holiness' seat at Rome. Among Dissenters too, much of this corrupt leaven is still retained, which hath indeed, more or less, leavened the whole lump. When men receive what they profess to believe and practise in religion, merely from the force of education, the authority of the church to which they belong, or the sanction

of custom and example; and not because they find it, upon mature inquiry, revealed and enjoined in scripture; this is really a species of popery, dishonouring, and offensive to God, and highly injurious to the interests of true religion. Upon this principle, a man might be a Jew, a Mahometan, a Deist, or Pagan, as well as a Christian, had it been his lot to have been born where any of these was the established religion of the country, or the religion of his relatives and connections. Hence the amazing force of custom in forming the religious creed and ritual of many; and neither Christ nor his Apostles have authority enough to make them recede from this, or adopt a new article into their faith or practice; tho' they can assign no scripture reason for the one, or against the other, nay, tho' scripture reasons and examples should lie wholly on the other side. Teachers and taught are mutually guilty in this respect, the one in not declaring and inculcating truth and duty, in the face of custom and popular prejudices; and the other in opposing these to the evidence of truth, in resting in the attainments of their fathers, discouraging and opposing those who would lead them back to apostolic and primitive example, and never seeking to advance towards perfection. Opposition to reformation is an infallible mark of antichrist wherever it exists and shews itself. Thus thousands take their religion upon trust, and are virtually Papists in a Protestant country, tho' they own not the Pope at Rome, nor bow to graven images†. But not

+ In proof of the above, I need only refer to the usual mode of dispensing the Lord's supper among us. Did the apostles live in our times, the great body of professing Christians in these lands, with all their professed reverence for their authority, would in fact excommunicate them; or, what amounts to the same thing, would not join with them in the breaking of bread; because they did it in a manner which custom does not sanction among us, and they would not yield its instituted form to humour us, nor we the form prescribed by the usage of our fathers to gratify them. They never once dreamed it to be a duty to annex the observance of a fast, and of Saturday and Monday's services to the administration of this holy ordinance, as appears from their writings and example; and must we not yet allow, that they knew their Master's will in this particular, and did not contradict it in their practice? The churches under their immediate inspection copied, in regard of the supper, their example, and that example continued to operate, in respect both to the frequency and simplicity of its administration, for about 400 years.

An appeal to the sacred oracles must determine the duty of Christians on this head, and where they are silent, or hold forth inspired example, the Church has no power to prescribe or modify; and to assert that she has, or to act upon the supposition of it, is to admit one of the most dangerous tenets of Popery. The word of God is complete, in respect both of faith and practice, whence nothing should be added in his service which it neither enjoins nor exemplifies. Wherever this ordinance is spoken of in scripture, whether in the gospels, the acts of the apostles, or epistles, we find not one word of the days and services at present attached to it. What are we to infer from this silence? May we not conclude, that these constitute no part, or necessary appendage of it in the sight of God; and hence, are a yoke of our own framing, a burden and obstacle in the way of its administration and reception? If this is not granted, then our Lord

content with this species of Popery, we discover great friendship for it even in its grossest and most superstitious form.

and his apostles must have omitted, in the institution, account and celebration of this ordinance, certain things necessary to its due observance; for I see not how we can evade the alternative. It would be as modest to acknowledge our own error in this case, as to maintain a position that will highly reflect both on our Lord and his apostles; for the present practice is a tacit reflexion on his wisdom and fidelity, as if he did not see what was so conducive to Christian improvement in this ordinance, or seeing it, gave not a single command, or direction respecting its observance; leaving a few Scotch Christians, about the sixteenth century, to discover it, thro' the persecution of the times.

The Apostle tells us, That Moses was faithful in God's house as a servant, but Christ as a Son. Did the former, in giving the law, or describing the institution of the passover, and enjoining its rite, leave any thing to the Jews to supply? or did they think themselves at liberty to make any such supplement? Is it possible then that our Lord would forbear even to mention, and also his apostles, who acted by his instructions, what we in our wisdom deem to necessary, were it really so; when he was faithful as a Son over the house or Church of God, and they as servants who had, for this purpose, obtained mercy of him? We justly blame the Romish and the Episcopal church for appointing the observance of various days and rites, which have no countenance in scripture; and yet we are guilty of the same thing, and act upon the very same principle, when we make it necessary, or act as if we thought so, to observe three week days every time this holy ordinance is administered among us; tho' we cannot adduce one single scripture precept or example to countenance us in this novel practice or innovation.

To believe as the church believes, and practise as the church practises is the pillar and ground of that system which pretends to an infallible head; and yet, in this affair at least, it is practically the great and leading doctrine among ourselves. And are not even Dissenters as backward to adopt the observance of any duty, or to reform any deviation from scripture precepts or example, where the sanction of custom operates the contrary way, as the members of any established church whatever? so many taking for granted that what is handed down from their forefathers must be scriptural, without giving themselves the trouble of examination. Hence, every attempt to correct this abuse meets with opposition, and gives occasion to reflexions and reproach, as if we had reached the utmost verge of Christian knowledge and practice, and thought ourselves as unerring in our judgment as the Pope. If not mistaken, the present practice in Scotland is not sanctioned by that of any other church on earth, nor even by our own adopted standards, which weigh so much in other cases.

The conduct of some is strangely inconsistent. While they allow that the observance of these days is no way essential to the ordinance, they would not, upon any account, join in it in their own congregation, should they not be observed: And yet perhaps, none are more ready to neglect public worship on these occasions, when the claims of the world interfere. They can also without scruple join in a neighbouring congregation, while they give attendance only on the Lord's day, or a part of it, thus condemning themselves in what they allow. But can any once suppose that the rule of duty is such a fluctuating, variable thing as changes with every change of circumstance, and leaves men to modify its obligation at pleasure? Such as will not consent that this ordinance, so conducive to Christian edification should be occasionally dispensed, without such observances as make it a burden, and the frequent enjoyment of it quite impracticable, would do well to reflect how they shall answer to their future Judge for obstructing the edification of others, and the purity of his institutions, by opposing a return to the original, simple plan of this sacred ordinance, from a fond attachment to what he hath no where required at their hand, either as a necessary appendage, or an essential part thereof. What gave rise to the present custom with our forefathers, hath long since ceased to exist; and it should be remembered, that

Many have dated the decline of the British empire from the inauspicious period of passing the famous Canada bill, which gave a legal establishment to the Roman catholic religion over vast tracts of country. Hereby the priests of Rome were provided with a legal salary for publishing their pernicious tenets, and inculcating the observance of the superstitious rites and poppies of their religion; a conduct as inconsistent in Protestants, as if the Legislature of a country should hire a number of quacks to vend poison of a deadly nature among the people, and promise them at the same time security and protection in the execution of their infernal plan. There is a most material difference betwixt forbearing to persecute for conscience's sake, to which all peaceable subjects have a just claim, and legalizing the commission of what God hath forbidden. Men would be greater than he, by pretending to give a legal sanction to what he cannot sanction in his creatures, for he cannot deny himself. He bestows the general benefits of his reign on men of all religions, without approving or sanctioning the errors of any; and let the rulers of the earth go, and do likewise: for this seems to be all the toleration or establishment of religion with which they have any concern. Waving other things, in commencing, and prosecuting the present war, a partiality for that religion, and its best friends and greatest supports, seems too apparent. Who does not remember the purport of a certain famous manifesto, enjoining, upon pain of confiscation and death, the full restoration of the Popish system in the Church, with all its ministers and vast revenues, as well as the re-establishment of the old despotism in the State? Have not we acceded to the general coalition, without requiring any retraction or explanation on this point, upon the part of our Roman-catholic Allies, or giving any such explanation on our own, as disavowed any intention to favour or promote the same scheme? Who can be ignorant, that the restoration of the discarded religion of Rome, in all its former power and splendor, hath been a principal object with the allied, beligerent powers, in all their exertions since the commencement of hostilities? and was our co-operation crowned with the desired and expected success,

the brazen serpent, tho' appointed and blessed of God for a season as a mean of healing, was ordered to be destroyed, when it came to be idolized, or perverted from its original intention.

These hints were thought worthy of a place here, to shew that implicit faith, and devotion to custom obtain with us, in certain cases, as well as with the devotees of Rome; and also to induce the Reader to think and examine for himself in religion, if he has not done so already, that he may be able to give a Scripture reason of the hope that is in him as a Christian, and of the religious services which he performs; lest he should be one day confounded by that question, "Who hath required this at your hand?"

would it not tend to secure the same object? Posterity will not acquit us, in all probability, of the design. Every one who has paid the least attention to what hath passed at home and abroad of late, will easily recollect a variety of circumstances, that seem to place this beyond any rational doubt, which makes it the less necessary to be more particular†.

+ As the Author hath retained many observations in the printed copy of these sermons throughout, which time would not permit him to overtake when delivered from the Pulpit, on the occasion referred to on Title-page; so this and the following particular, with one or two in the foregoing part of this Discourse, were then wholly omitted; which accounts for its uncommon length; for it was originally two, and indeed ought to be so divided, had it been adverted to in time.

The Reader will excuse the mention of a few additional circumstances here, which seem to ascertain our culpable partiality of late for the Roman catholic system. In the proclamation of our Head Commander to his soldiers the other year, when they entered into Winter quarters, he enjoined the men to shew the same external marks of reverence to the host when it passed, that are paid by the Roman-catholic soldiers. The reason assigned was, That "there are only a few ceremonies in which they and we differ." No difference in doctrine according to him. This might be perhaps, excusable in an officer, did he not annex the mitre and revenues of a Protestant Bishop, to his military staff; but it plainly shews the light in which some regard that religion, taking it in connexion with other things.

The friendly compliments that have passed of late betwixt us, and his Holiness, and especially, our having furnished him, for a time, with life guards, looks too much the same way. The following paragraph appeared in a paper, (The Sun, Tuesday, March 3. 1795) which is not apt to censure or misrepresent public measures, as an extract from the letter of a correspondent.—"Exeter, Feb. 15. Last week a detachment of the 12th dragoons arrived at Tavistock, lately from Rome, where they did duty at the Palace of the Pope, who consecrated both their standard and their horses, and had cast for them medals with the following legend—**ROME SAVED BY BRITISH CANNON.**" Is it to this instance of Papal superstition that we are to trace the late fashionable ceremony of consecrating military standards? To be consistent, we should send them all to Rome, to be there sprinkled with holy water, consecrated by the Pope, in person, and to pass thro' his ghostly hands for his paternal benediction. But we have got Priests at home who are quite qualified for such services, when a handsome pension is annexed, and may in time, should the craft prosper, be fitted for receiving a Cardinal's cap. Whenever these consecrated banners are unfurled, every Head should be uncovered in their presence, for the same reason that this is required in places of public worship; namely, because both are supposed to be sacred to Deity. Will a consecrated flag inspire men with courage, secure Heaven on their side, and cover their heads in the hour of danger? Have the rites of Rome of late acquired uncommon virtue? for the consecration of the Spanish Armada, by the holy Vicar of Christ himself, did not secure their triumphs over Britain; but perhaps, this rite will be more efficacious when performed by a modern military chaplin, a principal part of whose office is to consecrate the banners of the corps to which Ministerial favour hath attached him. The Jews of old vociferated, The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, when they were conspiring against, and ready to crucify the Lord of the temple.

On these hallowed occasions, the prayers presented to Heaven are generally composed of fulsome adulation, and bitter invectives. As a proof of the first, let the two following specimens suffice. "Consecrate this day, we humbly implore thee, O Lord of Hosts—consecrate the standard now put into the hands of these thy servants.—May they regard it as erected to God, their Sovereign

That it is dangerous to combine, or make a common cause with idolaters, appears from what the Psalmist saith; “ Confounded

and their country!” At the consecration of the colours of another Volunteer corps, the Reverend Doctor who officiated on the occasion, among other fine sentiments, had the following in his pious, patriotic address to his Maker:—“ Be propitious to these Christian soldiers, thy servants, devoted to thy fear.”—It is devoutly to be wished that the Military of Britain deserved this character, that oaths and imprecations did not proceed from their lips much oftener than prayers and praises, as a proof of their devotedness to the fear and service of God. Men may deal in empty, unmeaning compliments when they address one another, because they cannot read each other’s heart, but should lay these aside when they address him upon whom no compliments can impose. By the general lamentation of our Clergy of late over the downfall of Popery in France, as, according to them, the Christian faith, and the Christian religion, and over the sufferings and exile of its priests, one would naturally imagine Britain was become a Popish country, and had made a common cause, in all respects, with the votaries of that political religion. O what charity!

Foreigners entertain the same opinion of our favourable sentiments towards the religion of Rome. In the description of Corsica by Frederic, son of the late Theodore King of Corsica, in his account of General Paoli, it is remarked, that the Sacred Band, meaning the Clergy, who had sided with Paoli in favouring the British, “ received them as their deliverers from tyranny, and the protectors of their Roman Catholic religion,”—and that “the General Assembly, convoked by Paoli at Corte, in the most solemn manner surrendered their liberties to the King of Great Britain, and committed, at the same time, the care and protection of the Roman Catholic religion to that Monarch, tho’ a Protestant.” In the same account we are told, that Paoli and the whole kingdom had sworn to observe the constitution of France, in the presence of the supreme Being, whom they called to witness. It is hard to say, what honour or advantage can accrue from the accession of so many perjured beings, on whom lies and awaits the guilt and doom of that horrid crime. And indeed, common sense says, That those who have enticed them to this, and aided and abetted them in it, cannot be innocent. By the bye, this revolution presents a most dangerous precedent: It holds out, in effect, such language as this to the subjects of other states,— You may violate your allegiance, discard your rulers, and change your form of government whenever it is in your power; and bind yourselves by solemn oath to submit to, and maintain quite different rulers, and form of government.

In Canada we established Popery without acknowledging the Pope’s supremacy, but it is not so in Corsica, as appears from the solemn deed by which the grant of it was ratified, and also from the following declaration, in the Proclamation by Sir Gilbert Elliot, Viceroy of Corsica, in the name of the King:—

“ The exercise of the religion of your ancestors has been re-established, and a happy conclusion to the articles presented by the Parliament to his Holiness the Pope may soon be expected.”

In addition to the above, I shall advert only to the Proclamation of the present pretended King of France, and the unqualified promise of support which we have given him. In his late proclamation, he solemnly declares to all Europe, in the presence of God, his firm purpose and resolution, if once placed on the Throne of his ancestors, to re-establish Popery, in all its vigour and splendor, as well as the old system in the state. All this we knew, or ought to have known, before we acknowledged the justice of his pretensions to that throne, and promised to assist him in recovering it. Say, Reader, if these things, to which others might be added, do not speak our too favourable sentiments of the Roman Catholic religion, and our seeming wishes for its prosperity and continuance, when God in his providence is pulling it down? Say also, if this may not hasten, and increase our national judgments; for as curse was pronounced on the man who should rebuild Jericho; so those have reason to dread the curse of God, who attempt to support, or rebuild mystical Babylon, when he is dooming it to destruction, and causing its blood-cemented fabrics to shake to their foundation.

be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols." It might be rendered, like many other seeming imprecations in scripture, as a prediction or threatening; and, in that view, it has had its accomplishment on ancient idolaters, and will also on those that have served graven images in more modern times. Both Jehosaphat and Josiah, two godly princes, were made to smart for forming a coalition with, and joining their forces to the worshippers of idols; and it might have been foreseen, making reason, experience and scripture the rule of our judgment, that modern combinations with the servants of the grand idol in Rome, and all the trumpery of his graven images, would turn out to their mutual confusion. So faith God, whose word shall stand, " All they that serve graven images, that glory in, or boast themselves of idols, shall be confounded;" and to these may be added, all that aid and abet their cause; which accounts for the ill success that has of late attended the design and efforts to rebuild Babylon, if not on our part, at least on that of our Allies. It is truly a serious matter to be found leagued and acting with those powers that have been so long drunk with the blood of the saints, and are to this day the main pillars on which the antichristian system rests, that took infernal pleasure in persecution and bloodshed---leagued with them at the time, when the God of heaven appears to be visiting these crimes upon them, and giving them blood to drink, having found them worthy. " When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble." No wonder he should leave these Popish powers to desert us one after another, or turn their arms against us; because we have placed undue confidence in them, formed strict alliance with them, and bought their co-operation at the expence of such costly sacrifices as the nation is very unable to bear. " Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

Permit me to conclude this particular, with a passage from a pious and judicious author, who hath written upon this subject. " Who can refrain from wondering that the old mother of harlots and abominations of the earth should again lift up her head in this land, and that she should at this time of day meet with such kindly reception and entertainment among us! When the apocalyptic divine saw her in the height of her power, and decked in all her splendor, he wondered with great admiration; but that this enchantress should, in the bloom of her meretricious beauty, dazzle and bewitch the nations, and make them drunk with the wine of her fornication, is not quite so marvelous, as to behold her retaining the same power, and practising still the same arts, not altogether without success, even now in her extreme old age, when she stands tottering on the brink of her burning grave. That she should, in her present haggard,

worn-out form, pretend to new conquests ; and that, in places where her cheats had been discovered, and her magic charm broken, she should again attract the kind looks of kings and courtiers towards her, and decoy and infatuate kingdoms, equals the most romantic tale which her lying legends have to tell. To see them admiring her wrinkled face, courting her blasted favours, and returning to her stale and unwholesome embraces, is an event so odd and unaccountable, that it may well pass for a miracle, and is a demonstrative proof, that these her lovers are fallen into a state of greater dotage than herself."

To such a degree does corruption of morals unhappily prevail, that scarce a news paper but announces a number of thefts, acts of swindling, robberies, house breakings and the like; which, notwithstanding the many awful examples made for such crimes, seem to be on the increase. By these deeds of darkness the souls of many are ruined, and themselves brought to an untimely end. Luxury, avarice, dissipation, the love of false pleasure, and the pride of life hurry many of all ranks into gambling, and other vicious pursuits, which are destructive of industry, of morals, and social order. If we admit, that every species of lottery involves a solemn reference or appeal to Deity, to give a just decision, the having recourse to such an expedient, as a resource of revenue, cannot be innocent in the sight of Heaven. Does it not also present a temptation to the Public from year to year, by which not a few are snared and ruined†? The heathens regarded the casting of lots as a direct appeal to the Arbiter of the universe, as appears from their own writings, and the conduct of the heathen mariners in the case of Jonah; and the use we find made of it in scripture shews they were not mistaken. Solomon saith, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord;" which granted, the use of it in such cases is doing evil that good may come, which an apostle condemns as meritorious of damnation. But waving these things, from a subject so copious as our public sins, that may procure national judgments, I shall select only one more, which may be termed Gad, because it brings a troop in its train.

The too successful attempts made so to blend the Church with the State, as to make it subserve the views and designs

† Free Thoughts on the Toleration of Popery.

‡ The State lottery costs the Public perhaps three millions annually, to which the addition by it to the revenue bears little proportion. Tho' the people should be disposed to game, and may be wicked, yet they should have no legal temptation, by what some scruple not to call a species of swindling.

of the latter, with the various evils that result from this union, may be viewed as constituting a system highly offensive to God, and in many respects pernicious to men. Here I can give only a cursory glance at the nature and fruits of this system. In vain would we seek a precedent, to sanction this coalition, in the connexion of church and state among the Jews; for both these were under the immediate authority of God, and each was governed by the laws which he prescribed. The supreme magistrate in the state, and the high priest in the church were typical of Messiah, and prefigured, in the exercise of their functions, the nature of his offices and future reign. Indeed, much of that system was merely the shadow of good things to come, and meant to cease when he appeared of whom is the substance; for glorious as that system was, it had no glory by reason of the glory which excelleth, in that dispensation of grace and truth, which Messiah hath introduced and established. The commencement of the incorporation of church and state is usually dated from the reign of Constantine the Great, whose efforts to model the church according to his own fancy, or after the organization of the state, were too successful; yet he could plead the authority of a royal precedent, venerable on account of its antiquity even in his day. This precedent was furnished by Jeroboam king of Israel, when he set up his golden calves in Dan and Bethel, and gave his royal sanction, or a legal establishment to the mode of worship there prescribed. That wicked prince, actuated by reasons of state, formed, by this political device, a firm alliance betwixt church and state, in his dominions, which continued ever after, under the reign of his successors, till the kingdom of the ten tribes was destroyed. Hereby he made Israel to sin the great sin of idolatry, which proved the snare and ruin of his own family as well as kingdom. That gross corruption of the worship of the true God owed its rise and continuance to state policy, as the sacred text informs us; to prevent the children of Israel from returning to Rehoboam their first lord; and how often hath the union in question been employed as a state engine, to answer the basest of purposes, and, among others, to prevent the return of Christians to their rightful Lord, in the purity and simplicity of his worship?

A part of the good confession which our Lord witnessed before Pontius Pilate was, " My kingdom is not of this world." But the incorporation of the church, which hath been strenuously maintained both in Popish and Protestant countries since the period referred to above, is an attempt to make it a kingdom of the world; and the attempt hath so far unhappily succeeded as to strip her, in a great measure, of her original glory and beauty. The kingdom of God, and the kingdoms of the world are quite distinct in their origin, their laws, their tendency and end; and, by the unhallowed attempt to coalesce them, a monster

is produced, which resembles Nebuchadnezzar's image, partly gold, and partly clay; but the latter outweighs and tarnishes the former. The wound that the man of sin received, in the Papal chair in Rome, was in a great measure healed in the thrones of Protestant princes, when they usurped a supremacy over the church in all matters ecclesiastical as well as civil. The model originally adopted, with little regard to scripture, hath been adhered to, with very little variation, or improved upon, in the Popish and Protestant churches even to this day. The real church of Christ, however diversified in respect of time, place or external circumstances, is but one body, of which he is the Head, and every Christian a member in particular. But the system, which the wisdom of the world hath adopted, gives it many heads, and these supreme ones too; for according to it, every prince hath a right to be her supreme head in his own dominions; and hence she may have as many heads as there are kingdoms professedly Christian in the world. Nothing can be more plain and obvious than that, if one prince may of right possess supremacy or headship in the church of God, which composes his household on earth, then of course, every other possesses the same right within his own territory; and it is easy to see in what absurdities this must land us.

Strange monster indeed! Does not this make her, with all her unity, resemble the beast with seven heads and ten horns, yea, exceed it in monstrous deformity? Can a wife be chaste that professes subjection to so many husbands, and courts their favour and alliance? And can these churches be pure and loyal to their Head in heaven, who thus commit fornication with the kings and rulers of the earth? This system involves one glaring absurdity, if not impiety, while it attempts to concentrate in one point extremes as opposite as east and west, things as different in their nature, origin and ends as light and darkness, Christ and Belial, heaven and hell. Of this nature seems to be the investing of an individual with a headship over a Presbyterian church in one district, a Prelatical one in a second, and a Popish one in a third; binding him at the same time by solemn oath equally to maintain these within specified boundaries, and, without freedom of choice, to profess himself a member of a particular one of them. These different systems may be wrong, but they cannot be all right; for they are in many things diametrically opposite to each other. Should one of these be Antichrist, and of course, a part of Satan's kingdom in the world, as Protestants have long professed to believe, and once solemnly protested, whence they derive that name, can we once suppose that God, who is consistent with himself in all his works and ways, would authorize those who reign and decree justice by him, to exert the authority with which they are invested, for the suppression of vice and immorality, and the encouragement of piety and

virtue, in supporting and maintaining the kingdom of his avowed adversary, in direct opposition to his own,—a kingdom of darkness, superstition, bigotry and idolatry? As it is morally impossible for him to do such a thing, Heaven forbid we should once entertain the thought, or surmise the contrary. The systems of fallible and interested men may involve such impious absurdities, but let us never fasten them on the God of truth, order and consistency; for they make no part of that religion which he hath revealed in his word, yea, have tarnished its glory, and corrupted its native beauty and simplicity, so as to obscure or disguise its original features. Ecclesiastical Patronage, Test laws, Persecution, a Time-serving Clergy, and a number of other evils may be viewed as the native offspring of the alliance of church and state, and have been often felt and complained of as productive of very serious grievances†.

† Some thoughts on the above, if they can be overtaken, will have a place in the Appendix. Here however, I would subjoin a few remarks. Let none suppose that the Author means to insinuate, by what is suggested above, that in churches established by human laws worthy Christians and faithful ministers are not to be expected. The contrary is known to be a fact; yet such, acting in character, tho' they may not view the union of church and state in the light represented above, will lament the evils produced by it, as grievances of considerable magnitude in themselves, and a great hinderance to the gospel, and the spread of genuine Christianity in the world. These things however, involve more guilt, and sink much deeper in their consequences than most even of serious people are aware of, whence God may say respecting them, "Shall I not visit for these things? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Many in the communion of such churches are candid enough to own, that so far as these are established by human laws, and under the undue influence of the powers of the earth, they are not the churches of Christ, whose kingdom, in this and other respects, is not of this world, nor needs that his disciples should fight and contend, as hath been often the case, to secure this fancied privilege. The rights of Zion and her citizens that are worth contending for, and the security they have of enjoying them, are not to be found in acts of Parliament, in the edicts of kings and emperors, or in the decisions of councils and conclaves; but in her own sacred records, and in the perfections of her glorious Founder and Head. The more the former are sought after, and doated on, the less the latter is prized; and indeed, it is only blindness to the latter that ever led men to court and prize the former. The Church never prospered better, if growth in grace, in love, and holiness be allowed to constitute her prosperity, than when the powers of the earth, so far from favouring and establishing, proscribed her, and her members, and employed force, malice, and stratagem against her. This was the case for so many centuries, which we are taught to consider as her golden age. How expressive to this purpose what we have recorded in the 27th of Isaiah's prophecy from the 3d verse! There we have a dialogue between Jehovah and his Church under the figure of a vineyard. The passage, according to the noted version of the famous Dr. Lowth, late Bishop of London, runs; Ver. 2. "In that day,

To the beloved Vineyard, sing ye a responsive song.

3. It is I, Jehovah, that preserve her;
- J. I will water her every moment;
I will take care of her by night;
And by day I will keep guard over her.
4. V. I have no wall for my defence:
O that I had a fence of the thorn and brier!
- J. Against them should I march in battle,

That the things alluded to must be offensive to God, and detrimental to the best interests of mankind, whence they merit, and will probably procure his judgments, would more ful-

I should burn them up together.

5 Ah ! let her rather take hold of my protection.

V. Let him make peace with me !

Peace let him make with me !"

On this passage, of which the Bishop may be allowed to have given a just and faithful version, a few thoughts are humbly offered. The great Lord of all represents himself as the Guardian of Zion, and the all-sufficient source of her safety and felicity, which claims her gratitude and confidence. Yet, as the chosen tribes of old wished to be like the neighbouring nations, in having a visible, mortal king to reign over them, so the church here, inattentive to her invisible security and protection, presumes to say, that she had no wall for her defence, and to express a wish for a fence of thorns and briers, like other vineyards; in other words, that she might enjoy the protection of human laws, like earthly states, and be defended and supported by means foreign to her spiritual nature: for briers and thorns in scripture import, in general, if not always, something bad, or noxious. They are spoken of as the effects of the curse, and the mean of choking the precious seed in the field, whence it became unfruitful. To suppose that the anxiety discovered by professing Christians to enjoy what is termed a Legal establishment of religion, or of the church, may be here intended by her complaint and wish, is attaching a sense to them by no means forced or unnatural. But what is the bulwark or defence of a legal establishment, compared to the guardian care, and divine perfections of Zion's glorious Head, but like a fence of thorns and briers that may be soon cut down, or consumed with fire ? The former is like an impregnable wall of adamant, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. Briers and thorns wound and tear those that deal much in them, who had need to be well armed; and such as plant these fences, or glory and confide in their shadow and protection, are not seldom wounded by them; and when the Lord shall march against them in battle, and burn them up together, they will be in no small danger, as hath been awfully verified of late. " Who may abide the day of his coming ? for he is like a refiner's fire. For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven ; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble : and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Agreeable to the sense given above, which seems natural, and indeed unavoidable, the Lord, justly provoked at the preference given to these earthly means of human device for defence and security, as if those which he had provided were not sufficient, threatens to march in battle array against them, and to burn them up together, by the visitation of his wrath, and the effusion of his Spirit. This threatening shall be fully accomplished ; for God will consume with the breath of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming all that hay, stubble, thorns and briers that men have heaped up within the walls of Zion, and planted round her sacred inclosures ; and who does not see that he is doing it in the present day, by the alarming events of his holy providence ? He exhorts her, rather to take hold of his protection, as her all-sufficient bulwark and wall of defence, and puts a request in her mouth to that purpose, " Let him make peace with me ! Peace let him make with me !"—let him be reconciled to me thro' Messiah the great Peace-maker, and then shall I be raised above the need of any fence which human power can plant or rear. Or this reiterated petition may denote the exercise of the Church, when God shall destroy, according to his threatening, every such fence, and discover their futility to her safety, or rather, their obstruction to her real prosperity, and blemish on her spiritual beauty. Such idols shall then be cast to the moles and the bats. " Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. Rebuke the company of spear-men, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people."

ly appear, could we trace their nature and consequences at greater length. Tho' I have dwelt so long on a number of sins which are known to prevail in these lands, sins that are threatened, and have been often visited with the judgments of God; yet I cannot dismiss the subject without some improvement.

Some may perhaps object, Why dwell wholly on the dark side of things? Why not point out our virtues and advantages, as well as our sins, and the calamities which they procure? The former have been adverted to, in a preceding part of the discourse, tho' not so directly contained in the subject; for these are none of the things for which we are visited with the judgments of the Lord, the abuse of our religious advantages excepted. Besides, that part of the vineyard, being more inviting and productive, wants not plenty of hands to cultivate it; tho' the parts overgrown with briars, thorns and noxious weeds are much more extensive, and in more immediate need of culture. The sins animadverted on are severely reprehended by the prophets, in whose writings the most apt and striking passages almost every where occur. As no scripture is of private interpretation, what God hath said in his word to any nation or individual, he in effect saith to all that possess a similar character, and tread in similar paths. The reproofs and denunciations, therefore, which we find directed against certain sins and sinners in the sacred oracles, are intended to reach, in every age, the like practices and persons, to whom the word of salvation is sent; and our Lord's example, and that of his apostles justifies such application of them. In plainness of language, and severity of censure, the example set by the holy prophets is far from being exceeded. It is much to be wished there was no cause, that the charges exhibited could be easily refuted. But so long as heinous sins of various kinds abound, it remains a duty on the ministers of the gospel to expose and reprobate them, till men are brought to feel and act like Christians respecting them; tho' such conduct should procure them malevolence and reproach. When the laws of Heaven are openly transgressed, whoever be the transgressors, he is unworthy of the character of a servant of the Lord of hosts, who is afraid to lift up his voice like a trumpet, in remonstrating against such conduct. Shall the servants of earthly princes voluntarily expose life itself in their service? and will the ministers of the King of kings act the part of base, dastardly cowards, to whom the fear of man proves a snare? No danger or difficulty can excuse such conduct, else the reluctance of Moses to undertake an embassy to Pharaoh, and the efforts of Jonah to evade the execution of his commission to Nineveh would be justified. Nathan also might be blamed for his di-

rect charge to David, Jeremiah for his plain dealing with the king and princes of Israel, and John the Baptist for declaring Herod's conduct unlawful in retaining his Brother's wife for himself. But these men possessed a more noble spirit, and had not so learned their duty; for, like Caleb and Joshua, they followed God fully.

The charge God gave Jeremiah merits particular attention: "Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." The dignity of kings and princes, and the sacredness of the priestly character were not to shelter them from the necessary freedom of admonition, instruction, and reproof, any more than the common people; for the prophet's commission extended to them all. Neglect here would entail guilt and disgrace; for the prophet that teacheth lies, or concealeth the truth, in order to conciliate the favour of men, or avoid the effects of their displeasure, by palliating their vices, accommodating himself to their prejudices, or shunning to declare the wrath of God against their unrighteous deeds; such a prophet in Messiah's kingdom is the tail, and the blood of those that perish thro' such criminal neglect, will God require at his hand. In return for his faithfulness, however, Jeremiah, that noble Patriot, was accused of disaffection to the interests of his Country, and sedition against its government; yet his sedition, if attended to, would have saved that country; while the clamorous and rewarded loyalty of others enhanced its guilt, and hastened its ruin. An infinitely greater was charged with the same crime, charged with being an enemy to the temple, the Mosaic law, and to Cæsar. A perfidious disciple hires himself to those in power to betray his Master for thirty pieces of silver. A goodly price indeed at which he was valued by the civil and ecclesiastical rulers in old Israel; and how often has he since been depreciated, not merely by those whom some affect to term the Vulgar herd—the ignoble rabble, those of whom the Jewish Rabies said, "These people that know not the law, are accursed," but even by characters of the above description!

The Lord enjoined the prophet Ezekiel to take him a sharp knife, or a barber's rasor, with which he was to do certain things, with a figurative intent to denote the sharpness of these reproofs.

that he was called to administer in the discharge of his office, and the severity of the judgments he was commissioned to foretell and denounce. Another prophet uses the same significant figure. "In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, the head and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard." When he is pleased to hire any as the instruments of his providence for such purposes, he will liberally reward their services, as in the case of Cyrus, the Romans and others of old, tho' they knew him not; and those whom he will employ to bring down Antichrist and tyranny, and to punish their abettors, will he also amply recompence, be their character, in respect of religion, ever so defective; for God seldom employs his own children as the executioners of his justice. The censures and reproofs of these inspired men were close, faithful and severe, as the figure used imports, nor were they confined to the lower classes in society; for in the delivery of their message, they knew no privileged orders, and had no respect of persons, as is too common in every age with many in the sacred office; but reproved the sins even of courts and palaces, and denounced with authority the wrath of God against them. Even kings, princes, nobles and priests did they shave, sometimes sharply, and with severity, to adopt the language of the figure here used. When king Ahab, after the manner of wicked rulers, reproached Elijah as a troubler of Israel, a seditious person, and a disturber of the public peace, by his sermons and remonstrances, the answer of the prophet, who knew not how to flatter even princes, is worthy of notice. "And it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel. And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim." The sins and measures of kings and rulers may trouble whole nations, because offensive to God, and the mean of bringing down his judgments; and therefore his servants, and indeed every lover of God and their Country are bound to reprobate such conduct, and remonstrate against it, would they hope to be spared amidst the calamities which it may occasion.

Of Micaiah the prophet, the same prince, offended at his former plain and faithful remonstrances, reproofs and threatenings, faith, "I hate him, for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil." In whom lay the blame? Not surely in the prophet, who only declared the truth, and reproved the sins of Ahab, denouncing the wrath of God against them, which came in time to be executed; but in that wicked and idolatrous prince himself, who would not be reformed, but sold himself to commit wickedness. Ahab lost his life by disregard-

ing the admonitions of this man whom he hated; so fond are many to be flattered and deceived to their ruin, while they hate their real friends, and cherish their enemies. Hear Micahiah's reward for his fidelity, "Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction, and with water of affliction till I return in peace." This was his reward for his honesty, while the false prophets that flattered the king's vanity, applauded his measures, and promised him that success in them for which they prayed, were fed to the full at Jezebel's table; for they were the queen's chaplains. Micahiah, with that fortitude which truth and integrity inspire, replies, "If thou certainly return in peace, then hath not the Lord spoken by me. And he said, Harken all ye people." Soon did Ahab meet his fate by a bow drawn at a venture, whose arrow God directed to smite him between the joints of the harness, so that he died about the time of the sun going down.

Of Jehoram, Ahab's son, who vowed to put Elisha to death as the cause of those calamities of which he himself was the occasion, that prophet says, "See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head?" And we find another prophet saying to Asa, "Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Herein thou hast done foolishly." To David, after painting, in an apt similitude, the cruelty and oppression of his conduct in the matter of Uriah, Nathan brings home the charge, "Thou art the man," the guilty person whom I have described, and upon the description of whose criminal conduct, thou thyself hast pronounced sentence. Indeed, the king found, and left it on record, that such smiting did not wound his head; for he took it as a proof of the truest loyalty to his own person, and fidelity to his God, and esteemed the prophet, if possible, more than ever for this part of his conduct. Tho' the Baptist had little reason to expect a favourable reception from Herod, yet he declared to him the truth, and reproved his vices, for which he was respected, and heard gladly, till he came to touch his chief idol. Some would tax John of rashness, and a disregard to his own safety and life; yet God approved of his conduct, and avenged his wrongs.

These are patterns for our imitation, and, in similar cases, safe guides in the path of duty; for the word of God acquires its authority, not from the dignity of the person who dispenses it, or the sacredness of his character, but from the authority of that God who speaks therein, and requires his servants to preach the preaching that he bids them. But, alas! how few are disposed to copy such examples, when this exposes to inconvenience or loss? Need I adduce such examples to a Christian au-

dience, and make these remarks, to justify any freedom of animadversion taken in these Discourses?

What Jehovah says to one generation or individual, he says to all. To the workers of iniquity, he saith, " Except ye repent, ye shall all perish." To us, and our fellow men in these lands, he is speaking in his word, as he did to the Jews of old, and threatening, " Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies;" but how few are attentive to his voice! He is also addressing us, in the events of his providence, in accents audible and expressive as peals of thunder; but because many regard not his works, nor the operation of his hand, there is reason to fear, he will, according to his threatening, destroy them, and not build them up. How few are waiting for the Lord in the way of his judgments, and with their soul desiring him in the night of adversity, and with their spirit within them seeking him early! " O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries!" We have here pointed out the con-

[†] The Author begs leave to relate a little circumstance, which happened some months ago, as a specimen of what hath been too often practised of late. In reciting the above passage, in order to be sung at the close of Divine service, the following thought occurred, which was delivered to the audience. " We have tried various expedients to subdue our enemies, which have hitherto failed; but I could point out one more effectual than any that have been yet tried: That is, to hearken to God in his word and providence, and walk in his ways, agreeable to this passage. Should this be neglected, in vain shall we subsidize the powers of the earth to aid us, or trust to our fleets and armies; as it would be just with God to scatter and disperse the one, and should he blow with his winds, could easily make the other sink as lead in the mighty waters." It was also lamented that we are so apt to glory in the arm of flesh, and to make our own resources the prop of our confidence, which appears even in some of our favourite songs;

" Rule, Britannia! rule the waves."

In prayer, it was requested that we might be kept from relying on human aid, taught our dependance on God, and to ascribe to him the glory of what he hath wrought for us. It was also confessed, that He might justly scatter and disperse our armies, and also sink our fleets, in which we are so ready to confide, as the wooden walls of our isle, on account of the insults offered to his name in them, and by the nation. Is there not room for such prayers?

How was the Author surprised, to be assured soon afterwards, that a Gentleman then present asserted in different companies, that he heard him pray That God would scatter and disperse our armies, and sink our fleets amidst the devouring billows, a prayer at which his soul would shudder: for there is a very material difference betwixt what God may justly do, on account of our sins, and we ought to confess, and praying that he would actually do it. Finding the matter was circulated, and probably believed by some, when one in the line of a Gentleman asserted it as what he had heard with his own ears, the Author intended to take notice of it from the pulpit, repeating the expressions, and appealing to the audience respecting their identity; but, upon second thoughts, saw this would be paying too high a compliment to such as can resort to places of public worship, to wrest and misrepresent what they hear, to answer their own purposes. This circumstance would find no place here, did not instances of such

duct that will secure success in a just and necessary war; and those are a wise and happy people that observe it.

It is unnecessary to recapitulate the sins which, there is reason to fear, are the procuring cause of Divine judgments in the present day, or to advert to these afresh, both having been already under review. Every observer of the signs of the times will have his mind frequently directed to both. May not God justify his present awful procedure towards us, yea, still more terrible displays of his Justice, by assigning the reason he gave Ezekiel for his desolating judgments on Jerusalem and Judea? "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah (of Britain and Ireland) is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord feeth not." If we admit the truth of the charge so applied, and who can, who dare call the truth of it in question? may he not add, as in the case of that rebellious and unhappy people, "And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; but I will recompence their way upon their head?" In that, and many other passages of scripture, we may read our own national character, and mark the nature of our impending doom. Of these, I shall select only three, which you may consult at your leisure, not doubting but those of you that are acquainted with your Bible, can easily recollect many others. These are the First of Isaiah's, the Fifth of Jeremiah's, and the Seventh of Zechariah's prophecies. In the last, these words are remarkable, "But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant-stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit, by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts." Abounding sins, and aversion to the reproofs of God's word, in the mouth of his servants, are a certain, a never-failing prelude to signal judgments; and both these meet in our case.

But some will perhaps say, What concern have we in many sins that are committed in the land, particularly those which are involved in the measures of Rulers? for we are not guilty of them ourselves, nor do we approve of them in others. It

base conduct abound, and some materially suffer by them. Let the events of the day declare, if God hath not scattered our armies, both by sea and land, and dispersed some of our fleets on the face of the boisterous ocean, causing several in them, alas! to sink or founder amidst the waves. Let those who upbraid for supposing this just or possible, challenge the equity of such awful procedure, and arraign the Almighty at their bar. He will be justified when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth. "Strong is the Lord God that judgeth."

may be so; yet have we a concern in them. A well known, and esteemed author, speaking on this point, observes that we are "warranted to consider the acts of the legislature, while no alteration is desired by those on whom they are binding, as the acts of the whole nation. Even the edicts (adds he) of an arbitrary prince, whose will supplies the place of law, might involve a nation in guilt, if he enjoined what was contrary to the commands of God, and they thro' fear obeyed him. Much more then may laws, made by the representatives of a free people, be considered as acts of the community, if they excite no constitutional endeavour for relief" None more free of the sins of his countrymen, high and low, than the prophet Daniel, and yet you see, in the Ninth chapter of his book, how he confesses, and laments them, withal deprecating the misery they had brought upon his nation; in all which he hath set us, especially persons in public offices, an example, which we are bound to imitate. Let me then call upon those who fear God among us, to mourn and sigh for the abominations that are done in the land. Even the sons and daughters of the Almighty have their provocations too, for which the Lord may visit. Deprecate these spiritual judgments that are already inflicted on our nation, and also the awful scourge of war, famine and pestilence, with which we are either visited or threatened. May not the Lord address us, "And behold, ye are risen up in your fathers stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord toward *You*?" How gloomy our prospects, should he be provoked, for our chastisement, to blast our hopes from the fruits of the earth, by denying us the appointed weeks of harvest†? How must this evil be aggravated by the continuance of a war, which bears an hostile aspect on the state of Europe, and on our dearest interests! Yet the Lord can command a revival in our bondage, and turn our captivity as streams in the south. We would humbly hope the fatal period is not yet arrived, when he shall say of us, as he did of ancient Israel, "Tho' Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people; cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth. — Tho' Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, (viz. the land,) as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters: they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness." Let Christians, while there is hope, and "let the

† How painful to reflect, that while thousands of sturdy beggars (Emigrant priests, Ex-princes and nobles) live on the community, who, according to the apostle, should learn to work, if they would eat; myriads of the widows and orphans of those who have been *killed off*, to use a modern, polite phrase, in the course of this bloody and disastrous war, are cast as a burden on the Public at large, and left to starve, or beg their bread from door to door!

ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them. Ye that make mention of the Lord (that are the Lord's remembrancers) keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Ye who are thus exercised, who feel for his glory, and the happiness of fellow men, cannot tell how far the Lord may grant your request, respecting your Country; at least, you may hope that he will hide you in his pavilion in evil days, spare you as a man spareth his own son that serveth him, and own you as his in the day when he makes up his jewels. Let those share your pity and your prayers, who dream and boast of happiness, while they are heirs of misery and strangers to true peace of mind; who dream of liberty, while the bond slaves of corruption, led captive by Satan at pleasure. They are self-deceivers, and hypocrites of a very dangerous kind*.

But as for you, who have no care or desire to wait for the Lord in the way of his judgments, you must know that these, however heavy and diversified, are as nothing to what you are treasuring up for yourselves against the day of wrath, when God's final judgment shall be revealed. No where can you find shelter from the miseries of life, and the wrath to come,

* In a preceding part of this Discourse, hypocrisy in religion was adverted to as a great and provoking sin. But let not the tribe of infidels and libertines of the day bless themselves, as if they were not tainted with this vice; for they are often chargeable with the most detestable hypocrisy. The hypocrite who assumes the garb of godliness, bears testimony to the truth and excellency of true religion, by wishing to appear pious, and devout to his fellow men; for every counterfeit supposeth a reality, and was there no currency, there could be no forgery. The man who renounces the form of godliness, counteracts the influence of true religion in the world, and often dissembles, by pretending to be free, while he is a slave to his own passions, to be happy, while he is often miserable, and above the fears of death, judgment and eternity, while the thoughts of these not seldom haunt him, and fill his mind with uneasiness and remorse. The votaries of false pleasure frequently work out their own damnation with fear and trembling, which led one of them, while congratulated by his companions on the strength of his constitution, to protract the debauch for days and nights successively, and to enjoy to the full all that prosperous vice can boast, to utter with a sigh, upon seeing a dog enter the room, " Oh, that I were that dog!" So true is the aphorism, Sin, tho' sweet in the commission, in the issue biteth like an adder, and stingeth like a serpent. Is it not then the basest and most fatal kind of hypocrisy, to boast of the enjoyment of pleasure and happiness, with a view to draw the unwary into the lure, and support the worst of causes, while amidst such laughter and mirth the heart is sad, and gives the lie to assumed appearances? Let not such perfume to say, with an air of triumph, that they are no hypocrites; for, alas! such hypocrites abound, and every infidel and man of pleasure adds to the number.

† This Dr Doddridge relates in his life of Colonel Gardiner, as what he had from the Colonel's own mouth.

even the execution of "the eternal judgment", but under the cover of the Redeemer's blood and righteousness; and while he waits to be gracious, and declares that whosoever cometh to him, he will in no wise cast out, avail yourselves of the precious privilege, that your iniquity and unbelief prove not your ruin. Such conduct as you are chargeable with hath a deep hand in bringing down national judgments, and there is none less prepared to meet them. Listen to the dictates of his word, and the admonitions of his providence, which speaks aloud in the present day, that you may be wise to salvation, thro' faith in Christ Jefus. They that know his name will put their trust in him, and shall not be ashamed of their trust.

I am persuaded there are many now before me, who have seen the necessity of the Reform of existing abuses in these lands, who are also convinced that the sooner this good work is happily effected the better, and therefore, are not ashamed, nor afraid, in this day of degeneracy and corruption, to appear in their place the friends and advocates of so good a cause. I avow myself also one of those that felt, and still feel a conviction, upon mature thought, of the necessity of such a measure in present circumstances, to prevent all risk of a convulsion in our nation, the immediate effects of which might be terrible. Every succeeding day furnishes fresh proof of this; and as every species of public venality and corruption is offensive to God, and hurtful to the interests of morality, and national prosperity, it is truly surprising that any who bear the Christian name should plead for mercy to such a system, plead that this is not the time to take any step to abolish it, tho' it just now threatens to swallow up our dearest interests on earth in its all-devouring gulf. The word of God reprobates, and threatens with fiery indignation the very things complained of; and to suppose that a Christian, or a minister of the gospel acts out of character in espousing and pleading a cause so essential to the glory of the supreme Ruler, and the happiness of his intelligent offspring, would be absurd in the extreme. For my own part, I have not so learned Christ, nor admire their wisdom who think so.

Before I close the subj^ct, permit me to tender you a few friendly hints, which I hope will be acceptable. Tho' the terms Reform and Reformer should be unhappily branded, as if they implied every thing impious, vicious and blame-worthy; yet, while vice and misery find place on earth, as there will be room for reformation, so it will be honourable to espouse and plead that cause, tho' at the expence of reproach, misrepresentation, and ill treatment. Let your whole conduct correspond to your professed object, and manifest that the happiness of your Country, and your fellow men is dear to you as your own. Tho' Britain, like other kingdoms, hath had her youth, her

manhood and decline, and now gray hairs appear here and there upon her; yet let time declare that you never wished to wound her peace, much less to bring down her hoary looks, with sorrow and blood, to the grave. If God hath said that Britain must fall for her sins, yet let it be by other hands than those of reformers, who profess to have it as their wish and object to raise her drooping head above the deep waters into which she is plunged. If the vessel of the state should be unhappily wrecked in the storm, and the government and constitution perish amidst the general wreck, the probability of which is inculcated by recent events, and the native tendency of certain measures; let those who have rowed her into deep waters bear the guilt and the blame; but let us study to avoid the just imputation of either. While convinced of the indispensable necessity of the success of the cause, in which you have embarked, to the welfare, and even to the political existence of the Nation, forget not that it is the cause of reason and truth, and also of that God who purges away the dross, and takes away the tin of a degenerate people, by the operation of his judgments and grace; and thus makes all things new. In cleaving to it, let your conduct be peaceable, but steady, and perseverance will crown it with success; and suspect every one that would seduce you into intemperance and violence as an enemy to that cause, and laying snares for its defeat and your ruin.

Permit me to give another friendly caution, which, I hope, you will accept as from a brother, who cordially wishes your happiness and that of the human race. It is often surmised, with what truth I cannot determine, that the leading characters who have espoused the cause of reform in these lands, are what are commonly called infidels, who, in soliciting that, only aim at freedom from the restraints of religion and conscience, and liberty to treat Christianity as a cunningly devised fable, and its laws and institutions as a piece of priest-craft, calculated only to keep vulgar minds in awe. Heaven forbid there should be any truth in such surmises! The persuasion of their truth however, would operate powerfully on the minds of pious people, to deter them from co-operating with such, however much they might wish for reform. Perhaps, this may be one great object of circulating such an opinion; but allowing it to be true in the fullest extent, they would have too many brethren in this iniquity in these lands, who act more in character in opposing reformation. It is much to be lamented, that dangerous writings abound in the world, by which many are perverted from the faith of the Gospel, who greedily imbibe their poison, while they neglect the antidote. May the Lord himself convince them! I cannot here however enter at all into the argument, nor, would I hope, is it very necessary.

It must be confessed, that too many gross abuses and corruptions have been grafted upon genuine Christianity, and committed under its venerable shade, so as to obscure its glory, and furnish too many plausible objections to its enemies. Yet is it but candid to own, that Christianity itself is quite distinct from these; for it is no argument against civil government, that tyranny and oppression have been often blended with it, and usurped its name and sanction. The religion of Jesus not only teaches the purest morality, but also presents the most powerful motives to the practice of it. It brings life and immortality to light, and points out the way to their enjoyment. What have the rulers of France gained by renouncing Christianity, along with its counterfeit system in the church of Rome? Tho' Heaven hath made them a scourge to others, yet have they been left also to cut off one another; nor is this bloody work likely to end, till they come to see the error of their way. They have many things, however, to urge in alleviation of their guilt in this respect, to which we in these lands cannot once pretend. Tho' God may employ those, who reject his word, as the instruments of his providence, yet will he not fail to avenge the insults they offer him, by treating the treasures of his wisdom and knowledge, as a system of contradiction and folly. He may over-rule and employ Satan to cast out Satan—infidelity, in regard of revealed religion, to destroy the system of superstition and tyranny that hath so long prevailed in the world, as fire is sometimes applied to extract fire; but still will it remain a truth, if there is any credit due to scripture, That he who believeth not on the Son of God, or rejecteth the doctrine of his word, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him. "Wisdom is justified of her children."

Must not a Christian, upon his avowed principles, be struck and grieved at the inconsistency of those, who profess to hate corruption and tyranny on earth, at the same time they voluntarily submit to, and abet the cause of one, whom he is taught to consider as the greatest tyrant in the universe, and the grand master of all earthly tyrants? A real Christian will, however, cordially feel for the happiness even of such; and wish their views may be timely changed, wherein he thinks them mistaken. A short time will determine who is in the right; and should Christianity hold true, the contrary of which neither hath, nor can be proved, to the unbelievers of the Gospel the consequence must be serious beyond conception. To get wholly above the fear of this, is not in human nature, of the truth of which we may appeal to themselves. But, whatever it may be with some individuals, I hope better things of those who have appeared in the cause of reform, tho' I thus speak.

But, whatever be our sentiments respecting religion, or pub-

lic matters, let brotherly love still continue. Let us all unite in cordial concern for the peace, the union, and prosperity of our common Country, and banish from among us every thing of an opposite tendency. As we profess the same faith, by appearing before God as his people, let our conversation be such as becometh the gospel, which teaches us to forgive, and to love even our enemies, and to do good to those that hate us, much more to brethren and fellow Christians. Let mutual jealousies, resentment, and animosities cease, lest, by indulging these, we should hasten and enhance the ruin of our native Country; for "A kingdom divided against itself is brought into desolation." Such is unhappily the state of our nation at present, as must appear to every attentive observer, which is one sad token of the Lord's displeasure against us. If he heal not our divisions, and remove speedily the stroke of his hand, who can define the consequences? Let us be faithful, in our place and station, to our common Master in heaven, and to one another as Brethren, and members of the same Community. Let us also study the things that make for peace and mutual edification, making the word of God our rule, and his glory and the happiness of our Country and fellow creatures our great end. His judgments are abroad in the earth, we in part suffer by them, and the Lord's hand is still lifted up; so that we must either humble ourselves under it, or be crushed by it to destruction. Learn righteousness from the events of the day, and adore the Most High in them. "Therefore now amend your ways, and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you."

While false alarms are given, and produce their effects, there is an Alarm that ought to be sounded and heard from the palace to the cottage; "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand." This will he realize where guilt abounds; and, in respect of us, the awful alarm is too well founded. Blessed are they who can say, "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee." To add no more, let the friendly counsel, and solemn warning of a tried Patriot, and eminent Judge be acceptable to my Countrymen; "Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king;" "for strong is the Lord God who judgeth Us."

A P P E N D I X.

REASONS FOR A FAST†.

Cupar-Angus, Dec. 23. 1795.

"THE Presbytery met, &c. Having taken into their serious consideration the alarming aspect of Divine Providence towards these lands, they are convinced that the Lord is thereby loudly calling to the exercise of humiliation and repentance. The Presbytery therefore, appoint the 4th Thursday of January next, to be observed, in all the Congregations under their inspection, as a day of fasting and humiliation, or such other day about that time as may be most convenient; and they also appoint a Committee of their number to draw up reasons for the observance of the same, to be presented for their approbation against next meeting."

When met, according to appointment, on the 5th of January, the following reasons were produced, read, and unanimously approved of; and also appointed to be read by the different members from the pulpit, on the Sabbath preceding said day of humiliation, and accompanied with a suitable exhortation. For this purpose, their Clerk was enjoined to furnish each minister timely with a copy.

"The slightest attention to our conduct as a Community, and individuals, may suffice to shew; that the character given of ancient Israel, and the charge brought against them, apply but too justly to ourselves: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, children that are corrupters; that have forsaken the Lord, and provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, and gone away backward." Our sins are so great as to exceed conception, and so numerous and diversified, that they cannot be

† The Author did not happen to attend the Presbytery where such fast was proposed, and appointed; yet the measure met his hearty concurrence. He has no official authority for giving those reasons a place here; but their connexion with the subject of the preceding Discourses, and the hope they may prove of service to excite in others a sense of present danger and duty, induced to that step. A Brother indeed suggested the propriety of giving them a place, and expressed his wish to that purpose. It was thought proper to prefix the minute of Presbytery, appointing the observance of such a day for the purposes specified, and the substance also of that of second meeting, at least, so far as extracted in the Clerk's copy.

reckoned up in order. How few exemplify the duties they owe to God, their neighbour and themselves; while the opposite sins prevail in various forms. Intemperance of every kind abounds to an alarming degree. Are not many guilty of the most wanton abuse of the bounties of Providence, by surfeiting and drunkenness, while thousands of their fellow creatures are in want of the very necessaries of life, and Heaven is contending for the abuse of such mercies? Drunkenness, that debasing vice, degrades the character of many among all ranks, and is the fatal source of numerous disorders in families and society. The odious vice of uncleanness so much abounds, that the very mention of such deeds of darkness, as are daily committed among us, would offend a modest ear; while its votaries proclaim their sin as Sodom and hide it not. Pride, so unbecoming the character of a fallen, dependant creature, and so often marked with the express detestation of the Almighty, pervades the various ranks in life, and is productive of the most serious consequences. Originating from the real, or fancied endowments of body or mind, or from the adventitious circumstances of birth or fortune, this vice ruins individuals, and hath a fatal influence on the affairs of mankind. Covetousness, which is spiritual idolatry, ambition, and revenge; at the same time that they offend God, produce the worst effects among men.

So far from loving our neighbours as ourselves, and doing to others as we would wish they should do to us, were we in their case, among our prevailing sins may we not trace lying, dissimulation, corruption, venality, violent opposition to reformation in church and state; whence the very term is become odious to many; injustice, oppression, and shutting the ear against the cries of the oppressed; grinding the faces of the poor, imposition in the common intercourse of life, theft, robbery, gaming, the mispending of much wealth and precious time on vain and sinful amusements; hatred, variance, divisions, animosities, and a spirit of party, which generate calumny, and reproach, indicate the want of that charity which thinketh no evil, and are destructive of social happiness? To these things may be added, bloodshed and murder, which is suffered in many cases to pass with impunity, by which the land is defiled, and the Divine vengeance provoked. Indeed, the too general neglect of relative duties; the overbearing and oppressive carriage of superiors; the disrespectful conduct of inferiors, and their contempt of lawful authority; and the want of due attention to reciprocal duties between equals, are among the things which increase the amount of our national guilt, and the grounds of sorrow and humiliation.

With regard to God, the great author of being, and the source of all goodness, what ingratitude towards him! what

rebellion and treason against him exist in our isle! These appear in sentiment, disposition and practice. Pernicious errors abound, some denying the depravity of human nature, and the necessity of supernatural grace to its recovery; others denying the Lord that bought us, counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and offering despite to the Holy Spirit; with other dangerous errors that cherish the pride of human nature, deprecate the only Saviour, and are unfriendly to the interests of real, evangelical holiness. The most daring insults are offered to the sacred Majesty of the universe. His word, providence, perfections, and even being are practically, or in speculation denied by many, thro' a blind devotion to the boasted powers of depraved reason. His holy name is awfully profaned in common conversation, and by deliberate perjury, which lamentably prevails in our nation. By such abounding infidelity, so insulting to God, the best interests of mankind are also greatly endangered.

The institutions of religion are shamefully neglected by many, or carelessly attended; while the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life engage their eager pursuit. Heads of families culpably neglect to instruct their children and servants in the doctrines and duties of Christianity, and to exemplify these before them in their own conduct. That day which God hath appropriated to his own service, is alienated by many to the purposes of idleness, worldly busines, mutual visits, or sensual gratifications. And even too many professors content themselves with a partial observance of the duties of religion, and a mere form of godliness, like the Jews, drawing near to God with the mouth, and honouring him with the lips, while their hearts are far from him. With many, the duties of social religion in the family, and of personal religion in the closet, are either totally neglected, or superficially performed; and even among the real followers of Jesus, alas, how sad the change! Matters are not with them as in times past; for how are they fallen from their first love, and decline in doing their first works! The want of zeal for the glory of God, of due concern for the purity and success of gospel ordinances, the decline of brotherly love, and a spirit of conformity to the world, are but too apparent among ministers and private Christians of all denominations; whence religion is wounded in the house of its professed friends, the hands of enemies strengthened, and the grounds of the Lord's controversy with these lands increased. While many errors of a dangerous tendency are industriously propagated by some, are not these connived at by those who ought to be the guardians of truth, or zeal against them discouraged, and branded as officious? The incommunicable prerogatives of the great King and

Head of the Church are daringly invaded by an usurped supremacy, and the exercise of arbitrary powers, quite inconsistent with the nature of his kingdom, and the rights and privileges of his subjects; while the solemn ordinance that commemorates his death is prostituted to purposes quite foreign to its nature and design. Shall not the Lord visit for these things?

On account of these, and other heinous sins that might be specified, it is evident that the Lord hath a controversy with our Nation, and is summoning us to prepare ourselves to meet him. His displeasure is announced in the awful dispensations of his providence, with which, alas! we are now visited. In his righteous judgment, the influences of his holy Spirit, by which alone the Gospel can be successful, are in a great measure suspended; while few are laying it to heart, and imploring the removal of this mournful token of his anger. A spirit of error and indifference about the interests of truth is permitted to pervade the generality of professors. Blindness to the operation of God's hand, in the administration of his providence towards us, and inattention to its solemn language, seems to be one of the epidemic diseases of the day; whence few are waiting for the Lord in the way of his judgments. By these, and other spiritual judgments already inflicted, the Lord seems to threaten the removal of the candlestick of the Gospel from among us altogether, and to leave our Land, if speedy repentance prevent not, to be once more overspread with darkness and superstition, infidelity and vice; an awful judgment, to be earnestly deprecated by all that fear God, and have the welfare of these kingdoms at heart. The Lord hath likewise been pleading with us for a series of years by successive temporal strokes. He hath more than once threatened us with cleanliness of teeth; and is at present causing scarcity of bread to be more or less felt all over the Country, without the prospect either of a speedy or effectual supply. He hath also caused the Sword to devour abroad, and tho' we are yet spared from its immediate destruction, it hath produced numberless evils not to be defined; while the desirable prospect of peace is still unhappily removed at a distance. A malignant, or pestilential fever hath already cut off vast numbers of our Countrymen in our distant borders, and if kind Heaven do not interpose, may yet continue, or resume its dreadful ravages†. Thus the three great scourges of

† Since this Paper was written, the Public have been informed that such is really the case. "On Saturday evening Capt. Ware of the Mermaid frigate, arrived at the Admiralty, with dispatches from the West Indies. Such is the destruction of mankind by the yellow fever there, that one regiment, which consisted of 50 officers, and a full compliment of men, was reduced in four months, in St. Domingo, to two officers and 130 men‡. If such the fatal effects of this

‡ Caledonian Mercury, February 4th

the Almighty, the Sword, the Pestilence, and threatened Famine, combine to chastise us for our sins. In addition to all this, the Lord hath divided us in his anger, and thereby threatens our destruction; "A kingdom (says he) divided against itself is brought into desolation." And, to aggravate our National guilt, instead of reforming under the Rod, we are going backward, and revolting more and more.

For these and similar reasons, the Presbytery earnestly call upon all under their inspection to the exercise of penitential sorrow and deep humiliation for their own sins, and the sins that abound in the land, and of confession to him who alone can forgive the iniquity of them;—call upon them fervently to intreat, if it be the Lord's will, the speedy removal of these judgments, which are already inflicted, and that he would graciously avert the calamities with which we are farther threaten-

sever in one regiment, what havock may it be supposed to have produced among our soldiers and seamen in general, and among the planters? Indeed, various other accounts correspond to the above, and shew that the mortality must have been very great; and we are told that the distemper hath revived of late with increased malignity. In what light are we to view the disasters that have attended our West India convoy? Of about 220 transports, laden with troops and stores, only 50, or according to some accounts, 45 have returned to port with the Admiral, having been forced back, thro' stress of weather, after contending with the elements for seven weeks. Of these a number have foundered, and been wrecked, with the loss of all on board, of which every day brings fresh melancholy accounts. On the defeat of this enterprize the fate of our West India islands may turn; and the disastrous events that have already attended it speak not the favour of Heaven towards our nation, or our islands, much less the approbation of the Almighty of that system of grievous servitude, which we have so long maintained, and still mean to maintain there.

In the events alluded to above, and others of a similar nature, God is addressing all ranks and descriptions of men, from the highest to the lowest, in language scarce to be misunderstood; and it is the duty of his servants to re-echo that language, and inculcate its solemn admonitions. They carry a message as extensive and expressive as that entrusted of old to the patriotic prophet Jeremiah, and enforced by a fanatic no less serious and worthy of attention. "And touching the house of the king of Judah, say, Hear ye the word of the Lord: O house of David, thus saith the Lord, Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings. Thus saith the Lord, Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, O King of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates: Thus saith the Lord, Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place." Upon condition of their observing these things, he promises them honour, prosperity and protection; but threatens the reverse in case of their disobedience; yea, swears by himself, that if they would not hear these words, he would execute his wrath upon them, and prepare destroyers against them, every one with his weapons; and all, because they had forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God. In his word and providence, he now addresseth Britain in a similar manner, our King, our Princes, our Rulers, and the inhabitants of the whole land; and woe shall be to them if they hear him not.

ed;—Also to pray for the King, and all in lawful authority, that God would over-rule and direct their counsels and measures for the glory of his name, and the good of mankind; and dispose them, with disinterested integrity, speedily to correct and reform, so far as their authority and influence can go, whatever may be offensive in his sight, and injurious to men; likewise, to intreat that he would turn wars into peace to the ends of the earth, and that we and our fellow men may be disposed and permitted to live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty; withal praying for the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the effusion of his Spirit, to accompany the events of his providence, and the administration of the Gospel, that all ranks in these lands may be converted from the evil and error of their ways, and that the Lord may yet rejoice over our native Country, and the convulsed nations for good, and his rest among them be glorious.

Extracted by

JA. GRIMMOND, Presb. Clk.

EFFECTS of the Union of CHURCH and STATE.

SOME farther thoughts on the effects of legal establishments in religion, if they could be overtaken, were promised page 172. The motives that actuated Henry VIII. in reforming his dominions from Popery, or rather, detaching them from the see of Rome, are well known; but what he took from the Pope with one hand, he grasped for himself and successors with the other; adding the spoils of the pontifical mitre to the gems of his own diadem. The famous queen Elizabeth acted upon the same principle, in all her interference with ecclesiastical matters; and attempts to carry this farther than the Constitution allowed, cost the Stuart family a throne, and one of them his head; for they could still plead, in vindication of all their encroachments on the church, and invasions of the rights of conscience, the supremacy in ecclesiastical matters, with which the laws of the land invested them. These, in respect of the Church of England, vest the supreme magistrate, whether king or queen, with supreme power to exercise all manner of jurisdiction therein; and her Clergy have no manner of jurisdiction but by and under him; so that he, and not they, hath full power and authority to hear and determine all manner of ecclesiastical causes; and to reform and correct not only vice, but errors and heresies, which supposes his being the sole, competent judge of these. Agreeable to this, Queen Anne's veto,

or refusal of her sanction, as we are told, was enough to nullify the decision of both houses of convocation, in the case of Whiston's writings. They could do nothing decisively without her; nay, her single opinion carried it against them all. The church of Scotland, being Republican in her constitution, would not tamely submit to such an encroachment; yet, what could not be done by dint of authority, may be easily effected thro' court or ministerial influence.

To the same cause as the former may be traced the degrading yoke of Patronage, which hath reduced so many parochial charges into mere sinecures, and filled the nation with so many hirelings and time-servers, in many of whom is fulfilled that saying; "Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways." But the system is very consistent in this respect; for

† Happy for a people when the character of the ministers of religion among them corresponds to what God himself describes; "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity." What a contrast to this have we in the 23d of Jeremiah, from the 9th verse? So far as the things spoken there apply to those of the sacred order in after ages, they have reason to dread the doom pronounced against them. What the Lord accused the Jewish priests and prophets of in the 17th verse, is but too applicable to many in our own day: "They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you." Who does not know that it is customary with many public teachers of religion to address a promiscuous audience as if they were all worthy Christians, in a state of reconciliation with God, and in the direct road to eternal life? This mode of preaching is indeed polite and fashionable, and many love to have it so; but is this the way rightly to divide the word of life, and to give every one their portion in season? This mode is also very friendly to the interests of Satan's kingdom, as it lulls sinners securely asleep in his service. Such teachers, be they ever so eloquent, or famous, are, in God's estimation, dumb dogs that cannot, or will not bark. As Patronage admits such to the sheep-fold in another way than by the door, they determine to stand by it, and exert every nerve in supporting that system of oppression and injustice in the church.

The Author recollects to have once witnessed a violent contest on that subject in the General Assembly of the church of Scotland, when the champions on that side had the precaution to reserve their artillery till towards the close of the debate. A great majority in the court seemed shocked at the idea of petitioning the Legislature for the abolition of patronage, or the least abatement of its rigour, as if this constituted the rock on which their church is built. A Rev. Doctor, since famous for volunteering himself to be the Champion of the Church against Fanaticism, stood up in his place, and looking round, with a self-important, and significant air, exclaimed, "While I have the honour to head a number of my younger Brethren in this venerable Court, and the ability to shake my gray hairs over the Moderator's chair; (where he happened to stand) I shall oppose every such innovation to the utmost of my power." This heroic speech, which some admired, reminded the Author at the time of a passage of scripture equally heroic: "But God shall wound the head of his enemies: and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses," Upon that occasion, if not mistaken, it was determined that patronage was no grievance; and therefore, that no overtire should in future be brought before that court for its abolition or modification.

as the great object of the alliance of church and state, with the politicians of the world, seems to be, to secure influence to the latter: so the men that owe their ecclesiastical existence,

Should the Clergy as a body come to lose the spirit of their office, and to be actuated by sinister motives in their judicial proceedings, like a wretched female that hath lost her virtue, there is no making them blush at the most glaring inconsistencies in their conduct; and, of all men in the world, there is least hope of their reformation. Hence saith our Lord of the salt that hath lost its favour, "It is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men." That he hath the corrupt ministers of religion chiefly in his eye, is evident from the connexion, and the history of the church in all ages ascertains the justice of the remark. When such is unhappily the case, no wonder the church should he made the sanctuary of culprits, screening their offences from legal investigation, or just and necessary animadversion; or subjecting those to her severest censures, who have firmness to oppose her encroachments, or are not servile and complying enough to submit their neck to the degrading yoke that a despotic and triumphant majority would impose. Too many instances of this have occurred in modern, as well as in more early times; whence, as among the Jews, they that bear rule in her, are guilty of wresting, or perverting judgment.

Must not every one who advertis to the circumstance be struck at the impious farce, for so it deserves to be called, of the mock moderation of a Call, which custom and ecclesiastical laws still authorise; tho' it be universally known and granted, that the power of election, on such occasions, exists no longer in the people? What is the native language of such a service, if it is allowed to have any meaning? Does it not plainly suppose application to God by prayer, for direction to make a proper choice, and instruction to the people respecting the nature and ends of that privilege or right, of which the form supposes them still possessed; and the motives that ought to influence in the exercise of it? Seeing then the people have no choice, but are bound down to one object, and that object hath a presentation already in his possession, and is determined to abide by it, does not the moderation of a call in such cases offer a gross insult to God, and to the common sense of mankind? If the object of it be to impose upon men by the form, when the power is gone, the end is lost; for few are so stupidly ignorant as not to see thro' the gross deception, which cannot save even appearances, the real object being so apparent. Such an act of hypocrisy, or at least, inconsistent, or unmeaning form, is not the way to secure the approbation and blessing of God to such settlements. Shall not God visit for these things? shall not his soul be avenged on such as practise or countenance such fraudulent and impious arts?

Another fruit connected with that tree of servitude, Patronage, merits particular animadversion. The laws of the established church, and the uniform practice of her supreme court, require that every lay elder should produce, before he can be enrolled a member, a written attestation, signed by the Moderator of the Presbytery that delegates him, in their name and presence. If this attestation does not extend to his private conduct as the head of a family, and a member of society, which it doubtless ought, it at least bears, that he is exemplary for a regular attendance on the public institutions of religion in his parish church; and the very nature of it purports not only that he is a legally chosen, resident elder there, which, by the bye, is often not the case, but also, that he is in short in all respects what the nature of his office supposes, and the duties attached to it require. To attest this without any knowledge of the fact, is bad enough; but to attest it in the face of glaring evidence to the contrary, is a daring violation of truth, and also a gross insult to the God of truth, in whose name such courts profess to meet and constitute. Some of these lay elders, who cut a figure in the chief court, are well known seldom to attend public worship, and as for domestic religion, they are utter strangers to it. Nay, it is well if the leprosy of profanity appear not on their lips, and if their life be not stained with the

or the emoluments attached to it, to that alliance, are bound, from gratitude and interest, to give all their support to a system, to which they are indebted for their preferment and prospects, and also their security for both. It is too natural for man to support that which supports him, be it good or bad. The violent exertions of Patronage rob, or attempt to rob, professing Christians of what they ought to account their dearest rights, and reduce them to mere cyphers in a matter which concerns their present and future happiness. If so, the forcibly depriving a man of part of his property is not to be compared to it in point of guilt and serious consequences; and while this is punished with death, of how much sorer punishment must they be worthy who rob myriads of such a blessing? It does not much mend the matter to alledge, That if they are not pleased to submit to the patron's presentee as their pastor, they are at liberty to connect themselves with others, where they may have a voice in the call of their own pastor, unless it is granted, that they are better any where than in a national church; for while the reverse is believed, the operation and advocates of the law of Patronage in effect address them, " Go serve other gods."

Instead of relaxing of late in the exercise of this usurped right, it is in several instances exercised on a more contracted scale than formerly. But even upon the most liberal plan pleaded for by many, that of Heritors and Elders, the Son of God himself would have been excluded from a voice, because he was neither; and these respectable characters who sold their possessions to support their poor brethren, would have, by this generous deed, divested themselves of the right of chusing their own Pastor; because hereby they ceased to be Heritors. Are Patrons themselves always members of the church in the scripture sense? Are they not often such as Christians are bound to regard as heathen men and publicans, or from whom they are

fashionable vices of the age. Should any of these Gentlemen elders be sent for to visit the sick, and pray with them, a duty allowed to belong to their office, it is a hundred to one if they would not think themselves highly insulted.

Let not the Clergy then complain if they are despised, nor wonder that their conduct should stumble some at Christianity itself: for would not such conduct be deemed highly dishonourable in any private gentleman? Can they suppose the guilt and disgrace of such deeds can be diminished, in consequence of being committed in the name and more immediate presence of God, while the sanction of his authority is employed to give them currency? Let such stand up, and say in the face of Heaven, if there be no need of reform in the church, when such enormities find place within her walls? Let not any be surprised to find such men among the avowed enemies of reform in church and state, and the avowed advocates for corruption in both. If the base conduct of the sons of Eli made the people abhor the offering of the Lord, and absent from his courts, such would do well to reflect how far their conduct hath a similar tendency.

are called to withdraw as disorderly brethren, that deserve to be shut out of the communion of the faithful, nay, who have in fact shut themselves out? The law does not require, at least the practice of it, that they should possess one single Christian qualification, in order to entitle to the right of presenting to a vacancy. This they may exercise tho' of a different religion, or of no religion at all. Are there not of them who seldom, if ever appear at church, but when about to wreath this iron yoke around the neck of their fellow men? If no Power on earth would fix on the subjects of a foreign prince to fill up the departments of his government with proper officers, or creatures of his own, or even permit it, can we suppose God would do all this in his kingdom the church? When this is compared in scripture to a city, we must not suppose that the Spirit of God hath a rotten borough in his eye, where a self-elected junto claim and exercise the right of electing their successors in office; for such a corrupt system bears no resemblance to the city of God, nor can receive his sanction. The bulwarks of this city are not human laws; nor the weapons of her defence the bayonet or the sword. To what illicit and base practices, hath patronage often given occasion? If the temple of old was prostituted to a place of merchandize, and a den of thieves, is it not to be feared, that to some churches, professedly Christian, the same character still belongeth? In one of them, so much is this the case, that a learned foreigner^t gives that character of her Clergy, which is extracted in the following note‡.

^t Dr Wendeborn, in his View of England towards the close of the Eighteenth Century.

[‡] "There are among the episcopal clergy many worthy, learned, and exemplary men, but I fear, that there is too great a number of an opposite character, and who contribute very little to keep up the dignity of the order. A living author, whom I have before quoted, and who was himself bred in one of the English universities, says very pointedly, "The public have long remarked with indignation, that some of the most distinguished coxcombs, drunkards, debauchees, and gamesters, who shone at the watering places, and in all public places, but pulpits, are young men of the sacerdotal order."

No dissenting clergyman, whilst I have been in England, was ever punished with death as a criminal; but more than one of the established church have suffered on the gallows. The greediness with which some of them are in pursuit of many livings, or church-preferments; the severe manner in which others collect and exact their tithes, besides many other glaring blemishes, are exposed publicly in satirical prints, in writings and on the stage, but, as it seems, to little purpose. The great want of subsistence and poverty of some, contrasted with the prodigality and affluence of others, contributes too much to the lessening of the esteem of the Clergy among the people. Many, if I may so express it, are burthened with preferment and income, whilst others, sometimes deserving men, are almost, starving with their families, for want of the necessaries of life. The trade which is carried on with livings and advowsons, and the advertisements in the public papers relative to it, are things which a protestant foreigner, when

* Knox's Essays.

The coalition of church and state attempts also to destroy the obvious distinction betwixt the former and the world, which have ever been, and shall always remain distinct societies under very different heads; for in virtue of that connexion every one who is born a subject of the state may claim a right, on that very account, to be treated as a member of the church; and should any presume, in the exercise of their function, to call this in question, and insist upon some other qualification, they would lay themselves open to the lash of the law. This appears manifest from the nature or use of certain laws, which make the King's commission to any civil or military office an indisputable qualification for the Lord's supper; and is it not well known

he comes over to England, can at first hardly credit. Whoever possesses, as a lay man, the right of disposing of a living, regards it generally either as a part of his revenue, or as a provision for one of his children. The prices of an advowson, or a living, are regulated by the value of the flock, and the income of the shepherd. There are, it is true, proper laws against simony, but I am apprehensive, that they are frequently and easily evaded."

Upon these strictures the Reviewers remark; "On the whole, we really apprehend there is more serious disposition to piety among the lower classes of the people who think at all, than even among the clergy. If the venerable Lords who superintend all the concerns of the meek and holy religion professed in this kingdom, would but awake from the supineness of affluence, to effect a thorough reform in the doctrines, ritual, and more especially in the discipline of the church, they might soon remove the complaint of the contempt shewn to the order over which they preside. Such complaints are answered by complaints from the people, of finding so very few proper objects of respect; and so long as this recrimination continues, so long will the sore go on festering, until it reaches some crisis,—which is left to the reflexion of those whom it more immediately concerns†."

That such grounds of complaint exist elsewhere, tho' on a more contracted and less conspicuous scale, there is no reason to doubt. If affluence raises some of the clergy above the spirit and duties of their sacred function; others that have not this temptation can yet be very lax and remiss. Survey the Highlands of Scotland, and the general conduct of their clergy, and you must be convinced that the poor people are like sheep scattered abroad, having no shepherd. Here Roman catholic priests find a rich harvest, of which they have address enough to avail themselves. Indeed, the people are every whit as safe under their care, as under that of many of their own pastors, who have imbibed a number of the most dangerous of their religious tenets, without possessing their apparent sanctity, and official diligence and attention. It is almost equal charity to devise means to send the Gospel to such people, as to the distant Heathen.

That the complaisance of modern clergy, to the fashionable and polite world does not tend to recommend religion to their practice, or to croud their own churches, appears from a variety of circumstances, and, among others, from what is alluded to in the following paragraph, which appeared some time ago in one of our Scotch papers. "Patrons and Heritors leaving churches in a most ruinous situation, is a sad proof not only of their own irreligion, but also of their culpable inattention to those whom the polite world calls in contempt The Vulgar." These will be owned to need the aids of religion to humanize their manners, and influence their conduct, tho' persons of birth, philosophy and refined manners, should not; and hence the place of their public, religious assembly should be made at least decent and commodious."

that many could boast of this, who were not of the household of faith?

This leads to remark, that another noxious fruit, produced by the unnatural ingraftment of the church upon the state, is the Test-act or laws, which are imposed in the Southern part of the isle. Hereby the solemn ordinance of the supper is impiously prostituted as a test of loyalty, while the partaking of it is made a qualification for holding offices in the state, an use for which its Divine author never intended it. On this subject, the Editor of a certain Scotch paper justly observes; "When the sacrament of the Lord's supper was first instituted, our Saviour expressly directed the purpose to which it should be applied—Do this (says he) in remembrance of me, and in order to shew forth my death until I come. The test-act says, Do this that ye may become a Collector of taxes, a Custom-house officer, or an Alderman of a corporation, and in order to shew forth your eligibility to these offices. What a contrast! Surely this cannot be right; it is not such an application of a religious ordinance, as a good and conscientious Christian can seriously countenance. It is a mixture of sacred things with profane, of the lucre of this world with the duties of another. The Dissenters are to make a strong push to have the test law repealed this session†." The push hath been repeatedly made, but, to the disgrace and guilt of the nation, these remain yet unrepealed.

The most worthless characters claim this privilege, when they succeed in their application for a place under government; and the established ministers of religion are obliged to administer it, when so applied for, whatever may be their scruples. If I remember well, Leland, in his View of the Deistical writers, tells us, That the infamous Hobbes, who had written against the very being of God, having been a successful candidate for state preferment, received the ordinance of the supper as a test of his loyalty, from the hands of a professed minister of Christ, who could not do otherwise, but at the expence of a sacrifice too great for many to make, for the sake of truth, consistency, and a good conscience. Such a gross abuse of a Divine ordinance could never exist but in a state church; but will God suffer such unhallowed freedoms, under the sanction of legal authority, to pass with impunity? If those who partake of this ordinance unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body, eat and drink damnation or judgment to themselves, can these who patronize or commit so daring a crime escape his righteous judgment? Even heathens shewed greater deference to the unhallowed rites of their religion, from which the notoriously wicked and profane were excluded, by the proclamation of a herald.

† Edinburgh Advertiser, January 29th, 1790.

How intolerant, to impose such a test on the members of another established church, (the church of Scotland) and what a snare to seduce them from their former connection and profession! How unjust and oppressive also, to impose conformity in this upon Dissenters from the Established church, as a necessary condition of serving their Country, should they be chosen to any civil office, when the other alternative is a heavy penalty, which hath been often levied! Such measures may exclude honest, conscientious men, who cannot trifle with God, and their own conscience, for the sake of wordly gain, from serving their Country in offices of power and trust; but cannot exclude rogues, who can swallow every test that can be framed, provided their so doing pave the way to wealth and preferment. Is not this making gain of godliness, the church and altar the prostituted porch to Mammon's temple? Was religion, that sacred depositum, ever intended to answer such mean purposes? No wonder God should plead a controversy with systems which admit of such impieties, and, in his providence, destroy Anti-christ, so accoutr'd, with the breath of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming. "They that walk uprightly, walk surely." But while we are so tenacious of these corruptions, that it is deemed little less than sedition or treason to complain of them, or solicit their reform, as if the very existence of our Country depended upon them; are not the laws of God, and also the laws of the state, in more important points, trampled under foot? To this, and similar things, applies what God said to the Jews by his prophet; "For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab; and ye walk in their counsels, that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall be the reproach of my people."

It is not a little surprising, and indeed shews the inconsistency or partiality of the system, that a man may be chosen to a seat in Parliament, and there legislate for the whole Community, tho' not a member of the established church, without being obliged to conform; and yet, that conformity should be made an essential, indeed, an indispensable qualification for holding the meanest office under government! If a Dissenter, notwithstanding his religious connexion, may enjoy the greater, why, in the name of wonder, disqualify him for holding the less? why make the participation of this incompatible with the rights of conscience, and consistency of conduct? When we are so liberal to the devotees of Rome, why brand good subjects, by test-laws, merely because not in communion with the legalized, chartered church, as step-sons, or illegitimate children in the state, who must not be trusted, but upon condition of acting the base part of hypocrites or knaves, by renouncing in effect their former profession, or acting in direct opposition to their professed scruples, and their reasons for joining in a separate,

religious communion? This is holding out a strong temptation to dissemble, and act a double part both with God and man, which, it is to be feared, are its frequent fruits; or to disaffection to the existing powers and administration. The Court of France acted upon more liberal principles, when they preferred the Duke of Sully, and the famous Neckar to the important office of Financier, tho' they were both Protestants.

To the same consecrated alliance, and its source, or bulwark, the hallowed Supremacy, may be traced the supposed right in rulers to grant Toleration in religion, with certain, discretionary restrictions, to those who quit the communion of the churches which are established by, and incorporated with the state. This grant hath been extolled as a piece of great indulgence on their part, and as sounding a claim of gratitude on the part of those who enjoy it. Legal toleration supposes a right to prohibit the thing tolerated, else it is absurd; for with what propriety can a man be said to give what he hath no right to with-hold? To pretend to tolerate, by an act of the legislature, what God hath revealed and commanded in his word, appears a presumptuous attempt to prescribe to, and rule over him; as if such interference were necessary to give sanction and currency to his institutions in the different states on earth. It seems to resemble, comparing great things with small, the presenting a man with the freedom of a city or corporation, in consequence of which he is legally admitted a member. Indeed, all established churches, owe their birth and superiority to the monopolizing principle, which pervades the whole body politic; for, according to it, God himself, excuse the expression, must be made free in the state, or, what amounts to the same thing, his religion, before it can have any legal existence, or establishment there.

If it is a bad religion that is tolerated, and this idea is included in its differing from the national, or established system, at least, in the opinion of those who sanction that system, if they act consistently, what right have they to tolerate it? Would it not be absurd to talk of a right to tolerate the breach of any part, or of the whole of the Divine law, and yet the same authority is interposed in both cases. And to pretend to establish, by human laws what God hath expressly enjoined, is indeed to insult him, as if his own laws were not sufficient for that purpose; while the law, of every petty state, and the authority of their rulers are deemed every way adequate to the establishment of their respective governments. What prince on earth hath recourse to a foreign power to give sanction to any law or institution, he is pleased to enact, in order to secure its observance among his subjects? Is Jehovah the only king in the universe that must be obliged to his dependant creatures in such cases, while they have cause to boast, that they have esta-

blished and protected his religion, his church or kingdom, within their dominions? Besides, to tolerate what we suppose he hath not sanctioned, or what we do not see to be right, favours evidently of the Pope's dispensing or indulging power.

What constitutes an individual, in the judgment of charity, a Christian, constitutes also a Christian church, with respect to a number of individuals, joining together for the purposes of religious worship, and of enjoying Christian privileges, namely, a professed belief of the doctrines of Christianity, and the due observance of its precepts and institutions; and it is this alone which gives the Christian religion a proper establishment in society, and not the sanction of human laws, or the fences of national power. The only toleration, or establishment of religion, that belongs to the Powers of the earth, seems to be, To protect its professors in the enjoyment of their rights as men, and subjects of the state, while they act worthy of that protection, never presuming to interfere between God and his umpire conscience, whose Lord he alone is, nor to infringe upon its sacred and inviolable rights. The inroads that have been so often made on the rights of conscience, by rulers in church and state, will receive, in the day of retribution, a due recompence of reward. But it may perhaps be said, that the things objected to result from the abuse of religious establishments, and therefore, can furnish no just argument against their lawfulness or propriety. This might be allowed, if no other objection could be urged against them but what arises from their abuse. The tree is known by its fruit, and the nature of this tree may be inferred from the nature of the fruit which it hath uniformly produced; for this hath been always hostile to the civil and religious liberties of mankind, whence we may conclude that it is not of God. The decline of Christianity, when established by Constantine, was not accidental; and like causes always produce like effects. The abuses consequent upon such establishment, wherever it prevails, with their parent system, have furnished the enemies of Christianity with abundant materials, which they have not failed dexterously to improve to its prejudice.

The preceding remarks are far from being intended to militate against individual members of legalized or national churches, or to palliate the errors or improprieties of dissenters. Large allowance should be made for the prejudices of education. While they build their Christian character on the faith, the hope and practice of genuine Christianity, they ought to be recognized and regarded as Brethren, and may be so, without bidding them God speed in the things in which they are apprehended to deviate from the simplicity of the Gospel. Tho' it be just and proper, in certain cases, to dissent, yet must it be on Christian principles. Is it not to be feared, that this is not always the case, that many dissent from humour, whim and

caprice? Their great object seems not to be, to enjoy and observe the institutions of Christ in purity, and to have their conscience subjected to his authority; and hence, no wonder they should be unstable as water, and do not excel. They still carry with them so much of the old leaven, that it is scarce possible to bring them to follow Christ fully. They still wish to make the churches from which they have withdrawn a model, with the exception of those things which they have felt to be a grievance; instead of copying the example set them in Scripture, and giving unreserved obedience to its unerring dictates. For these and many other reasons, most of which may be traced to the incorporating system, dissenters in general have little cause to glory. May the Lord soon rebuke the calves which the people have set up and worshipped, that Ephraim may no more envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim; that wars may cease to the ends of the earth, and truth and peace, liberty, and righteousness may flourish over all nations!

N. B. It escaped me to observe in its proper place, that the Westminster Confession of Faith recognizes the authority, or supreme power of the Civil magistrate in the Church. The words of the Confession are; "The Civil magistrate hath authority, and it is his duty to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed; and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call Synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God." Chap. 23. Of the Civil Magistrate. This defines the power of the Magistrate in the Church of Scotland, which extends to matters of faith as well as practice, and makes him sole or ultimate judge in respect to both. No Dissenters can consistently profess faith in this article, else they condemn themselves in forsaking the communion of that church over which he thus presides.

ON THE PUNISHMENT OF CRIMES.

THE Reader was promised some strictures, page 140, on the mode of punishing crimes in our nation. It is much to be wished, that Legislators would direct the law rather to reformation than severity; that they would endeavour to prevent crimes, and reclaim criminals, rather by making punishment formidable than familiar. Then prisons, instead of sending forth wretches seven times more the heirs of hell than they find them; instead of returning those, if returned alive, who have

been committed for the commission of one crime, capable of perpetrating a thousand, we might see them restored to virtue, to the community, and to themselves. In the croud reflexion is banished from the mind, and vice kept in countenance; for if evil communication corrupt good manners, it must confirm and rivet the bad. Places of solitude are most friendly to the exercise of thought and penitence, and, of consequence, the most likely to reform the bad, while they effectually prevent the fatal effects of association in iniquity, which is often formed in places of public confinement. Some attempts are making to introduce this salutary mode. The way to reform a corrupt people is not to increase punishments, and their severity, but to make them most effectual. Experience shews that sanguinary laws do not always operate to the prevention of crimes; for these nations which make fewest crimes capital are least pestered with them. Many of the most judicious have called the validity of that right in question, which civil communities have assumed of inflicting capital punishment for crimes, which neither the law of nature, nor of Revelation make capital. It is the province of justice to commensurate the nature and extent of the punishment, as much as possible, to the nature and demerit of the crime. This they argue in this manner. To inflict the same punishment for crimes of a very different nature, where a difference can be made; or to suffer atrocious ones to escape with a slighter punishment, while those of unspeakably less demerit are made capital, amounts almost, if not altogether, to a perversion of justice. If those who enact or execute human laws are herein ordained of God, and bound to act for him, and agreeably to his will, so far as made known to them, they can then have no power to make that capital which he hath not made so, or to dispense with the sanction of his law, in cases where he hath annexed death to the perpetration of certain crimes.

It is a sad symptom of the prevailing avarice of a nation, not to say of their contempt of the Divine authority, when the laws respecting property are more severe, or more strictly put in execuction, than those which concern the safety or the life of the members of the community. In cases of murder, the right of society is obvious and incontestible, both from the law of nature, and of God; for the law of self-preservation, which is so deeply rooted in human nature, teaches to cut off the man who has, without just cause, taken the life of another; and says the irreversible mandate of Heaven, "He that sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Untutored nature recoils at the thought of murder, and rises up in arms against it: while no law of nature inculcates the right of taking another's life, merely because he hath stolen our property. The penalty is by no means adequate to the crime; for the thief may reim-

burse the owner, while the compensation of life is more than what the whole world can give. The mode of punishing the alienation of property by death, makes proper redress impossible; for hereby the community is deprived of the benefit that might arise from the future labours of the culprit, and the injured individual receives no adequate compensation, indeed, no compensation whatever, unless the death of his fellow creature can be supposed to compensate for the loss of his property. Such a compensation would be set aside in a court of equity, where reason, and not custom, prejudice or precedent, is allowed to speak; for what proportion is there betwixt the inconvenience arising from the loss of a part of one's property, and the loss of another's life? Is it pleaded, that the individual resigns, in effect, his right to and over his own life, to the community of which he is a member, and whose protection he consequently enjoys? This is impossible; for how can he barter that which is not his own, let the returns be what they will? His life is God's, and in cases where he has not pronounced it forfeited, man can have no right to take it; and should he do so, he is guilty of robbing an individual of the dearest pledge or trust he can possess in the world, and God of his indispensable right, that of recalling the life of his creature at pleasure. Numbers cannot make that lawful which would be quite unlawful betwixt individuals; for the voice of the multitude alters not the essential nature of things. Man is the living image of his Maker, and that image must not be destroyed, but when his justice requires it; and even then, is to be treated with decency, for his sake who gave it being, and whom it represents. Where is the prince on earth that would suffer his image or statue, tho' but a piece of stone or marble that may easily be restored, to be treated as the human frame is in certain executions?

Even savages are directed by the feeble rays of nature's light to be tender of the lives of one another; seldom shedding the blood of their fellow creature, but in retaliation of some former injury. All civil communities, in their infant state, make few crimes capital, and have few executions among them. It is only as they become more civilized, and improve in wealth, and the arts of luxury, that penal laws are enacted; as if an increase of property enhanced its value, and proportionably degraded individuals, and depreciated their lives*. The accumu-

* In various ways is man degraded, and his happiness and life depreciated. Are not military executions often cruel and bloody beyond what necessity can plead or justice authorise? We were told very lately in the public papers, that at Cambridge, if I remember well, a Court-martial sentenced a youth of sixteen, in one of the English Fencible regiments, to receive a 1000 lashes for some misdemeanor, 800 of which were inflicted at one time. This had like to have produced a very serious commotion in the place, the inhabitants of which were filled with indignation at the inhumanity, and cruelty of an execution, at the

lation of wealth is attended with an increase of fears for its security, these produce new, penal edicts; which erect, in

very idea of which a feeling heart must revolt. A remonstrance was presented to the head Commander on the occasion, but how it ended, I cannot tell, as I happend not to see the paper in which the sequel was promised. "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast." The Mosaic law expressly provided, that no delinquent should receive above forty stripes, for a reason that does honour to our nature, and is equally conclusive in every age and country, namely, that our Brother might not appear *vile in our eyes*.

Not only in the military line are the bounds of humanity exceeded, but also in our criminal code, and in the execution of the criminal law. While we reprobate the executions in France, and the outrages of a lawless banditti, with ourselves, hath it not been the calm decision of justice, to fix up the head of a criminal upon a pole, to the full view of spectators, as in the case of O'Connor in Ireland, lately executed for treason? How often also have criminals been hung up with usin chains, and left torot piece-meal in the open air, to the danger of the health of the inhabitants, as well as the hurt of their feelings! One would imagine that such statutes had been enacted by Goths and Vandals, and executed only by Barbarians, Scythians, or Indian hordes, who were utter strangers to Christianity, and all the improvements of civilized life. The Jews were forbidden to suffer the body of an executed criminal to remain any time exposed to public view.

Is it not also a very common thing in Europe for princes to sell their subjects, not only to a species of servitude, like the Africen chiefs, but to the slaughter, hiring them out for a subsidy, and a poll compensation? For those that are missed, or fall in battle, a certain, stipulated sum is paid, not indeed, to be given to their widows, orphans, or aged parents, but to be deposited in the coffers of those, whose treasures are perhaps, already overgrown. It was wittily enough remarked, by the Editor of a London paper, upon the bloody defeat at Dunkirk, that a certain —— brought his hogs that morning to a good market, no fewer of a certain description having fallen than 8000, which, at the rate of L. 20 a head, the sum stipulated in such cases, amounted to L. 240,000. A princely sum indeed, but far from honourable in the mode of its acquisition.

The Jewish rulers themselves, who plotted and effected the death of the Son of God, had so much, however, of natural conscience left, that they would not put the price of his blood into their treasury, tho' they regarded him as an impostor; and what private person would chuse to put the price of his neighbour's blood into his coffer? tho' in modern wars the fathers of their people scruple not to do this with the price of the blood of myriads of their political children! Can we suppose that many tears will be shed for such events, however mournful, and affecting, as serve to procure such accessions of wealth, or that those can at heart be enemies to a system by which their private revenues may be so much increased? These things remind one of what is recorded by an ancient prophet, so applicable to such measures: "Thus saith the Lord my God, Feed the flock of the slaughter; whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty; and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not." No wonder this charge should be preceded by a call upon the Authors of such deeds to lamentation, who are compared to stately, but felled trees; intimating, perhap, that like these, they were fit fuel for the flames of threatened wrath. But shocking as this species of traffic is, would to God it were the only species of commerce in human flesh carried on in the world. The Author hath often felt the duty of pleading the cause of the oppressed and enslaved Africans, while there was hope of our granting them redress; but now he looks forward with solemn awe to the approaching interposition of Heaven in their favour, fearing Britain shall not have the honour to proclaim liberty to these captives, whose deliverance shall come from another quarter, and past labours and sorrows be rewarded at our cost: for the Judge of all the earth will do them right: redress their grievances, and avenge their wrongs. Where is the prince on earth that would suffer his subjects to be so treated with impunity,

a manner, gibbets around our possessions to deter every invader. With all our penal laws, is it not a little surprising, that our nation should exhibit to the world a greater number of public executions, than, perhaps, the half of Europe taken together? It is very probable, this is not so much owing to the greater licentiousness of our people, as to the native influence of these very laws that are intended to check it, and the mode of carrying them into execution. While that does not so much tend to mortify the corrupt bias within, and to reform the individuals, as to check the outward expressions of it, what is it but like lopping off the branches of a tree, instead of rooting it out; or attempting to stem a torrent, while its source is permitted to receive new accessions from day to day? When people are accustomed to see the same punishment inflicted for crimes very different in their degrees of guilt and turpitude, they are thence led to lose all sense of distinction in the crimes themselves; and thus indiscriminate, penal laws counteract the great purples of morality. Nothing, indeed, is more natural for those who seldom examine things for themselves, than to estimate crimes by the nature and extent of the penalty annexed to them; which shews the necessity of their being proportioned, abstracted from the natural equity of the measure. New laws ever produce new transgressions, and these again require fresh restraints, while the operation and sanction of conscience is little aided by either, if not fatally perverted. It is not new laws to punish vice, or the vigorous execution of old ones, that will effectually check its progress among a people. What tends to check its contagion, and reform the individual, is of infinitely greater consequence to society than all the severe edicts which human authority can enact, or human power execute. As in the natural, so in the body politic, every method that can promise a cure ought to be tried, before any member is cut off as irremediable. The object of punishment is, or ought to be, not the destruction, but the correction or amendment of the offender; for by the due exercise of the restrictive arts of government, the law may become the guardian, instead of being the terror and scourge of the people. The very persons whose case may seem most desperate, may yet be won by proper management, at least, they may be so employed as to be neither a nuisance, nor a burden to the state. Few, perhaps, are so grossly depraved, that neither perseverance nor proper ma-

if able to avenge their wrongs? Believe then, ye Britons, that God will never disgrace the throne of his glory, by a conduct of which the most petty, earthly prince would be ashamed; and believing it, tremble at the prospect of the awful retribution of his justice, which shall transmit the memory of your crimes to latest ages. "Be not deceived, God will not be mocked."

nagement can reclaim them; the attempt is at least noble, and success in a few instances may more than counterbalance disappointment in a thousand. It is truly-hard, when the security of our property cannot be cemented but with the blood of our fellow creatures, and when none is permitted to see his last crime, without the risk of expiating it by his death. Tho' crimes defile, and the souls of criminals become as dross; yet the hand of power, leniently applied, may be the mean of refining, and purging away their dross. Were those in power and station, careful to exemplify in their own conduct whatever is lovely, honourable, virtuous and of good report, then might we hope for a reformation among the lower classes: but should the reverse remain notoriously the case, what can be expected but that the vicious should become still more yile, and profigate, and receive fresh accessions to their number?

When a criminal is indicted for theft, and the libel found relevant to infer the pains of law, a humane jury-man may find himself very hard put to it to bring in a verdict against him, whence such may escape altogether; whereas, were the libel restricted to an arbitrary punishment, he would not hesitate to find it proved, tho' the proof should not be so direct and conclusive. Owing to this circumstance, many have been acquitted, while their judge and jury have had a conviction in their own mind of their guilt; because the law requires that two witnesses should agree in the material circumstances of their evidence, which cannot always be obtained even in cases of real guilt, and where a variety of presumptive arguments amount to proof.

This paper, which was written about ten years ago, the leading sentiments of which the Author recollects to have borrowed from some book or other that passed thro' his hands, would he now conclude with the observation of a certain noble Duke†, delivered in the debates on the noted bills lately passed. Speaking of the farther extension of the criminal code, intended by these bills, he says, "Such laws might be defensible in the times in which they passed; for it would not be saying too much to call them barbarous, when compared with the present: but when all Europe was year after year, lessening the punishment of death, as doubting whether they had a right to take a subject's life away, except for murder, or what was likely to lead to it, surely it would be a reflection on this country that we were so greatly increasing it*."

† The Duke of Bedford.

* If the above opinion be just, in which the noble Duke is not singular, what are most of our executions but murder, under the sanction, and specious forms of law and justice, which must greatly enhance our public guilt? This, with the acquittal or impunity of capital offenders, hath treasured up much

A LETTER.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR favours requesting us to send our late Delegates, or others in their stead, to the Convention, proposed to meet at Edinburgh 19th current, (November 1793) came duly to hand, and were laid before our Society. After some deliberation, tho' they expressed their earnest wish to shew every possible mark of respect to the Delegates from England, and regret that it did not suit their convenience to wait on the last Convention before it broke up; yet, for certain reasons, which appertained to them of weight, they deemed it inexpedient, in present circumstances, to delegate any anew. They, therefore, agreed to appoint their Committee to draw up a letter in their name to the Convention, should it meet, in compliance with which appointment, we send you the following.

Gentlemen and Brother Citizens[†], we have pledged ourselves

wrath against the day of wrath. The crime of murder is of all others the most heinous and shocking in its nature, and the neglect of punishing it the most criminal, and, in its consequences, the most serious. In the 35th of Numbers, as also in other passages of scripture, this crime is condemned as worthy of death. In that chapter, it is repeatedly said, "The murderer shall surely be put to death;" and, it is added as a reason, "for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it." On these passages, a learned Commentator^{||} remarks; "The laws concerning murderers are a lesson to all, and especially to judges and magistrates, that willful murder is a crime which ought to be avenged. God does here expressly, and several times, forbid to let a murderer live, or to take any ransom for his life. He declares, that the impunity of that crime draws a curse upon the country where it is committed; and that there shall be no atonement for that land where the shedding of blood shall be suffered to go unpunished; which ought to beget in us an extreme horror for murder, and every thing that leads to it; as it proves likewise that princes and magistrates have no authority to acquit willful murderers." Would those who acquit Duellists and Child-murderers but duly consider these things, they would tremble at the prospect of that doom which they are bringing on themselves, and their native Country, on which, besides, lies, it is to be feared, much of the blood shed from time to time in the wars of Europe, in which we have generally taken an active and conspicuous part; which blood hath a loud cry in the ears of the great Author of life, and will be remembered in the day of recompence.

^{||} Ostervald.

[†] This Letter was promised to the Public, page 6. of the Address prefixed to these sermons. The object of inserting it here is not to throw a reflexion on that Convention, or their proceedings, having known nothing of either but what appeared in public, but merely to shew, as suggested in that address, how groundless and unfounded the slanders of many have been, and how they have presumed to attach blame to certain characters without the least foundation for it in truth. There is indeed, some reason to believe the letter was not publicly produced on the occasion referred to, as the receipt of it was not acknowledged.

[‡] This term is become of late exceeding obnoxious to some, when given to any but themselves, as if it carried, so applied, something hostile to the Constitution and government of our Country in its very sound. That system must

to support the cause of Reform by every eligible and legal mean in our power, and therefore wish well to every measure that promises success to your united exertions. Every one engaged in the cause, and acting in character, we are proud to call our Brother, and willing to co-operate with him so far as circumstances and prudence may permit. We are happy to hear that the late Convention made so respectable an appearance, and conducted their discussions with such spirit and unanimity. We persuade ourselves, their meeting may do essential service to the common cause, and so more than compensate all the expence and inconvenience of attending it. Yet, with all due deference, we beg leave to observe, that calling a Convention together, so soon after their late meeting, may not be attended with the same beneficial effects. We wish however, our fears on this head may be happily disappointed. Their late meeting has been publicly represented as seditious, and however clear it may stand of that charge, yet re-assembling so soon may be deemed a daring insult to those in power, and as such resented, to the prejudice of the cause in which we are embarked. It is possible, according to the common proverb, to make more haste than good speed. We cannot help fearing, that the rumour of this second Convention may have hastened the removal of that worthy Champion in the cause of Freedom, Mr Muir, which may possibly endanger his valuable life.

We congratulate our Brethren from England for their zeal in the cause, and cordially wish success to their laudable exertions, and the exertions of the Societies to which they respectively belong. We think it exceedingly proper, that the societies in and about Edinburgh should shew them every attention and respect in their power, and have no doubt but they will; and we ourselves would have been happy to have enjoyed the pleasure of a personal interview, tho' we see not this, in the mode proposed, to be conducive to the advancement of the cause of reform. We beg, however, they would accept of our friendly wishes, and the assurance of our firm attachment in the cause of our Country's peace and prosperity. We thank our Friends in Edinburgh for their disinterested zeal in the busines, and give them full credit for the goodness of their intentions. And

Be very illiberal and contracted, which would exclude members of society from the participation of what that term imports, and make the mere assumption of it a crime. But Christians, by an authority higher than theirs, have an incontestable right to that character; for all worthy of that name "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-Citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." In the 15th Psalm, entitled The character of a Citizen of Zion described, and also in the 24th, we find several important particulars comprised in that character, which those who would exclusively arrogate it to themselves, are far from monopolizing. Heaven sanctions the use of the term, and earth has no right to restrict its application.

should the Convention meet, as proposed, it is our heart's desire, and prayer to Heaven, that the wisdom from above may direct their deliberations, and the providence of the Almighty crown them with success. Your laying this before them when met, and their sustaining our reasons for not appearing with you by our Delegates, will very much oblige,

Dear Sir, with all due regard and respect,
Your and Their Brethren, in the common cause, &c.

E X T R A C T S^f.

The following observations are extracted from a sermon of the famous Dr WATSON, Bishop of Llandaff, preached before the University of Cambridge.

“ IT is possible that the very small part of the subjects of this mighty Empire, with which the right of electing the representation for the whole is at present lodged, may become so corrupted and abandoned in their choice, as to elevate to that high distinction men of arbitrary principles, or of flagitious lives, and strangers to all principle, or of ruined fortunes, and fitted for every species of political prostitution. It is possible that a majority of such a representation may betray their trust, may sacrifice their honour to their interest, may become poor thro’ luxury, and profligate thro’ poverty. It is possible that a system of reciprocal corruption may take place between a bad Minister, and such a venal representation, that he may bribe them with

^f It becomes the character of every professed servant of the Prince of Peace, who came into the world not to destroy men’s lives but to save them, to do all in his power to bring the destructive art of war, and those that lead to it, into disrepute and abhorrence among men. With this view the following Extracts are inserted. The just and striking sentiments contained in them, are not to be viewed, however, as an unqualified censure, either on the military art, or on those who exercise it; for so far as they are employed and act on the defensive only, their profession is honourable, and will be necessary, while the lusts of ambition, pride, avarice and revenge rule in the hearts of those from whom originate wars and fightings among men. Tho’ armies are too often made up of the off-scourings of mankind; yet many in that line possess sentiments and dispositions that would do honour to any character, which lead them to lament and deprecate the effects of war, instead of delighting in it. The best and greatest of men hate war; none but fools view it as a pastime.

the public money, and that they may profusely grant him the public money, in order to share in the plunder of the people. It is possible that from an increase of commerce, and extent of empire, the influence of the Crown may be so far enlarged as to enable any Minister to lay an undue bias upon the judgments of individuals in both houses of Parliament, by distributing among them either private pensions, or the lucrative employments of public trust—it is possible that, under such circumstances, the foundation of the Constitution may be gradually undermined, and the great fabric of Civil Liberty finally subverted by the very formality of Laws, and by the immediate agency of the very powers destined to support it—it is possible, lastly, that the bulk of the people, mistaking the forms and shadows of the constitution for its substance and reality, may not be sensible of the danger, till they are borne down to the earth under the pressure of taxes; may not be roused from their lethargy, till they are fretted and galled with the chains of slavery. Then, however, at last we are persuaded, that they will not degenerate from the blood of their ancestors, but with united hands and hearts, drag forth to condign punishment, the most pestilent of all traitors, the traitors against the Constitution and the common safety."

It is much to be wished that the learned Prelate's possibilities may never become realities, an event to be fervently deprecated by every Friend of his Country, as a prelude, if not of its ruin, at least to its degradation, and calamity. To this objection to the above reasoning, "Your ancestors resisted a King in his usurpation of the rights of Parliament, but if you were to resist, it must be King and Parliament united," the enlightened Bishop makes this remarkable reply—"There may be a Tyranny of the whole Legislature, as well as one of its Members; the Tyranny of the King consists in making his will the Law; the Tyranny of a Legislature consists in making private interest a main principle of public conduct, and the Law of course an instrument of oppression to the people in general!" Instead of apologizing to the Reader for inserting the above extract, I proceed to give another from the Bishop's Charge to the Clergy of his Diocese, June, 1791.

"Professions of attachment to our Constitution in Church and state have been made by me on so many occasions, that I think it needless to repeat them on this. If any one, from the freedom with which I have been accustomed to speak of certain defects in both, should be disposed to question the sincerity of these professions, nothing that I could say would remove his prejudices, I pray God to give him a more charitable mind. I leave it, however, to impartial men to decide, whose attachment to the Constitution is greatest—that of him who labours to remove

such rotten parts of the glorious fabric of civil and religious freedom as daily invite the attack of its enemies—or that of him who, not unconscious of the danger, contents himself with thinking it will not fall in his time. May the wisdom of our Rulers, shewn as well by their moderation in removing what is unsound, as by their firmness in retaining what is whole, preserve this mighty edifice, the work of ages, and the envy of the world, from being levelled to the ground by the rude hand of popular discontent, of fanatical zeal, or republican violence."

Surely the Bishop, and those who are of his opinion, as above expressed, may be as good friends to King and Constitution, as the famous Reeves, a pensioned Magistrate, and Chief Justice in New Foundland, or any of his associates. Under the pretext of exalting the prerogative of the Crown, how does he stab the Constitution to the vitals, as appears from the following extract of a late famous production of his, entitled, *Thoughts on the English Government!* "In fine, the Government of England is a Monarchy, the Monarch is the ancient stock, from which have sprung those goodly Branches of the Legislature, the Lords and Commons, that at the same time give ornament to the Tree, and afford shelter to those who seek protection under it. But these are still only branches who derive their origin and their nutriment from the common Parent—they may be lopped off, and the Tree is a tree still; shorn indeed of its honours, but not, like them, cast into the fire. The Kingly Government may go on in all its functions without Lords or Commons."

We have been assured that the Minister was advised and admonished of this production, and its nature, while in the press, which he was openly dared to defy; yet he and his brethren connived at, and defended it. Of what men must that association be formed that hath such a man for its active head? If we may judge of the principles entertained by the members, from the specimen published to the world by their Master, it would appear their great object was to overturn the British Constitution, under the plausible pretext of supporting the prerogative of the Crown, which struck the House of Commons so forcibly, that his Impeachment for a libel on the Constitution was voted, with the exception of two votes. The articles of that Impeachment were, 1. "That all liberty originates and flows from the King—2. That all security of property is in the King alone—3. That the Revolution is a fraud, and a thing never to be commemorated—4. That the Dissenters ought not to be tolerated---5. That the Whigs are always dangerous." Those who can advance or patronize such doctrines, give reason to suspect, that their professed regard for the supreme Magistrate proceeds not from real attachment to his person, or the rank he

holds in the state, but merely from his power of conferring a place or pension. Once unable to serve their purpose, and they hold him equally cheap with the other two branches of the Legislature; and indeed, their means to secure their lucrative places, may prove no less hostile to the safety of his person, and the security of the Constitution and government, than to the Liberties of the People. Of this mind were some of our most enlightened, and patriotic statesmen, when these things came to be debated in the senate.

In Mr Sheridan's speech, when he impeached Mr Reeves upon his pamphlet, we find the following remarks; "It might at a first glance seem that the circumstance of the Chairman of such an Association as that at the Crown and Anchor being the Author of that Libel before the House was of a trivial nature; but if it was considered that the Chairman himself was in the constant habit of Corresponding, and Intercourse with the Treasury,—that that Society had other two Thousand Societies branched off, and affiliated therewith, and that such doctrines as the Libel now before the House obtained the most rapid, and, he might say, fatal circulation thro' the Country, when it appeared that the Correspondence between Mr Reeves's Mother society and the two thousand Nurseries of his principles would make fourteen Volumes, he thought the seriousness of such connection, was indeed, of no light consideration, but very deep interest."

Betwixt violent Republicans, who are hostile to the Regal branch of the Constitution, if any such exist in the nation, and Reevesites, who appear, from the specimen given of their principles, to be equally hostile to the other two essential branches of the Legislature, the Constitution seems to be in no small danger. If the late Bills were meant, or calculated to guard against these opposite extremes, they might be the more excusable. But what has the Crown, or Ministers to dread from the other two branches of the Legislature, unless it be the promulgation of certain, unwelcome truths from the debates, and opposition of the Minority, which, from season to season, engage the attention of the Public?

With regard to the Bills, whose operation, some think, affects the Prince no less than the people, an able Senator expressed himself, "This system must terminate either in a submission that will put an end at once to all the liberties of the people, or in actual, open violence and fury: in either case the alternative is dreadful." If the above remark be just, may not the authors and abettors of such a measure be viewed as in effect betraying the best interests of their King and Country, and furnishing a gross libel against both him and his administration, as if the safety of his person, and the efficiency of his government, could not be secured but by the sacrifice of the

dearest rights and privileges of the people? What if they should take it into their head to think and question, "Whether a government that cannot be supported by other means, should be supported at all?"

As the internal policy of a nation may bear an unfriendly aspect to the liberties of the people, so their policy towards neighbouring states may be hostile to the liberty and happiness of mankind in general. The apathy of Europe in tamely permitting the plunder of Poland, and the wickedness of some in taking an active part in it, or testifying their approbation of that infernal deed, by guaranteeing such infamous plunder, must be highly provoking to the King of nations, who will avenge it, and entail disgrace on a civilized age. Truly strange, that those who outrage humanity by such deeds, and violate the most sacred rights of nations and of man, should yet have the effrontery of attempting to make the God of truth and justice a partisan in their crimes, and claiming to be revered as gods, and celebrated as benefactors of mankind!! May the Power of powers soon bring all nations to regard each other as Brethren, and convert the Te Deums of Despotism over the slaughter of man, and the inthrallment of nations, into the songs of rational liberty, over the whole earth! May the mountain of the Lord's house be soon established on the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, that all nations may flow unto it, and hence, beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, not lifting up sword against each other, nor learning war any more; but reclining every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, when none shall make them afraid†!

† It was observed, in one of the preceding discourses, that the diversity of sentiment respecting public concerns, and especially the unhappy alienation of affection, of which it is too often unhappily productive, should be viewed as a serious judgment, portending no good to these lands. But why should a difference of opinion respecting the great interests of our common Country, in which the great object at heart may be the same, create any alienation of affection? Let mutual jealousies be laid aside, nor let it once be furnished, that those who profess to wish for reform in the State, desire to level the sticks in society, to overturn the present government, acting for the good of the whole, or to promote an equal partition of property. Heaven forbid, and cause its heaviest curse to alight on the selfish wretch who seeks his own benefit at the expence of others, or prefers his own individual interest to the happiness of his Country, and of the human race! Are we not all Brethren, and, if we understand things aright, have but one interest? In our union of sentiment, at least of affection, and exertion consists our honour and our safety. Remember the fable, in which the father, in order to inculcate on his children the great advantage of their mutual agreement, exhorts them to break in two a faggot of sticks, which they found impracticable, and then desired them to break them one by one, which they easily effected. A divided nation becomes an easy prey; yet union is desirable only when it hath the public good, and the happiness of mankind at large for its object; and such union may God soon grant us in his providence!

EXTRACT FROM DR YOUNG's seventh SATIRE.

WHILE I survey the blessings of our isle;
 Her arts triumphant in the royal smile,
 Her public wounds bound up, her credit high,
 Her commerce spreading sails in every sky,
 The pleasing scene recalls my theme again,
 And shews the madness of ambitious men,
 Who, fond of bloodshed, draw the murd'ring sword,
 And burn to give mankind a single lord.

The follies past are of a private kind,
 Their sphere is small, their mischief is confin'd;
 But daring men there are (awake, my muse,
 And raise thy verse) who bolder phrenzy chuse;
 Who, stung by glory, rave, and bound away;
 The world their field, and humankind their prey.

The Grecian chief, th' enthusiast of his pride,
 With rage and terror stalking by his side,
 Raves round the globe; he soars into a god!
 Stand fast, *Olympus!* and sustain his nod.
 The pest divine in horrid grandeur reigns,
 And thrives on mankind's miseries, and pains.
 What slaughter'd hosts! what cities in a blaze!
 What wasted countries! and what crimson seas!
 With orphans tears his impious bowl o'erflows,
 And cries of kingdoms lull him to repose!

And cannot thrice ten hundred years unpraise
 The boist'rous boy, and blast his guilty bays;
 Why want we then encomiums on the storm,
 Or famine, or volcano? they perform
 Their mighty deeds; they hero-like can slay,
 And spread their ample desarts in a day.
 O great alliance! O divine renown!
 With dearth, and pestilence to share the crown.
 When men extol a wild destroyer's name,
 Earth's Builder and Preserver they blaspheme.

One to destroy is murder by the law,
 And gibbets keep the lifted hand in awe;
 To murder thousands takes a specious name,
 War's glorious art, and gives immortal fame.

When after battle I the field have seen
 Spread o'er with ghastly shapes, which once were men;
 A nation crush'd! a nation of the brave!
 A realm of death! and on this side the grave!
 Are there, said I, who from this sad survey,
 This human chaos, carry smiles away!
 How did my heart with indignation rise!
 How honest nature twell'd into my eyes!

How was I shock'd to think the hero's trade
 Of such materials, *fame* and *triumph*, made!
 How guilty these? yet not less guilty they,
 Who reach false glory by a smoother way;
 Who wrap destruction up in gentle words,
 And bows and smiles more fatal than their swords;
 Who stifle *nature*, and subsist on *art*;
 Who coia the *face* and petrify the *heart*;
 All real kindness for the shew discard,
 As marble polish'd, and as marble hard:
 Who do for gold what Christians do thro' grace,
 "With open arms their enemies embrace."
 Who give a nod when broken hearts repine;
 "The thinnest food on which a wretch can dine?"
 Or, if they serve you, serve you disinclin'd,
 And, in their height of kindness, are unkind.
 Such *courtiers* were, and such again may be,
Walpole, when men forget to copy thee."

____ "Know you disease?
 Or horrid War?—With war, This fatal hour,
 Europa groans (so call we a small field,
 Where kings run mad). In Our world, death deputes
 Intemperance to do the work of age;
 And hanging up the quiver nature gave him,
 As slow of execution, for dispatch
 Sends forth Imperial Butchers; bids them slay
 Their sheep (the silly sheep they fleec'd before),
 And toss him twice Ten thousand at a meal.
 Sit all your executioners on thrones?
 With you, can rage for plunder make a God?
 And bloodshed wash out ev'ry other stain?
 Beats your brave breast for formidable scenes,
 Where fame and empire wait upon the sword?
 See fields in blood; hear naval thunders rise;
 Britannia's voice! _____
 Some, for hard masters, broken under arms,
 In battle lopt away, with half their limbs,
 Beg bitter bread thro' realms their valour sav'd,
 If so the Tyrant, or his Minion, doom.
 Where dwarfs are often stilted, and betray
 A littleness of soul by worlds o'er-run,
 And nations laid in blood. Dread sacrifice
 To Christian pride! which had with horrors shock
 The darkest Pagans, offer'd to their Gods.
 That Prince, and That alone, is truly Great,
 Who draws the sword reluctant, gladly sheathes;

On empire builds what empire far outweighs,
And makes his Throne a scaffold to the skies.
O Britain, infamous for Suicide!
An Island in thy manners! far disjoin'd
From the whole world of Rationals beside!
In ambient waves plunge thy polluted head,
Wash the dire stain, nor shock the Continent."

NIGHT-THOUGHTS.

“ Violence

Proceeded, and oppression, and sword-law,
Thro' all the plain, and refuge none was found,
Adam was all in tears, and to his guide,
Lamenting turn'd full sad;—O! what are these?
Death's ministers, not men! who thus deal death
Inhumanly to men, and multiply
Ten thousand fold the sin of him who slew
His brother: for of whom such massacre
Make they but of their Brethren, men of men?
Where cattle pastur'd late, now scatter'd lies
With carcases and arms th' insanguin'd field.
To overcome in battle, and subdue
Nations, and bring home spoils with infinite
Man-slaughter, shall be held the highest pitch
Of human glory, and for glory done
Of triumph, to be fly'd great conquerors,
Patrons of mankind, gods, and sons of gods;
Destroyers rightlier call'd, and plagues of men.
Thus fame shall be achiev'd, renown on earth,
And what most merits fame in silence hid.
To whom thus Michael: Those whom last thou saw'ft
In triumph and luxurious wealth, are they
First seen in acts of prowess eminent,
And great exploits; but of true virtue void:
Who having spilt much blood, and done much waste
Subduing nations, and achiev'd thereby
Fame in the world, high titles, and rich prey,
Shall change their course to pleasure, ease, and sloth,
Surfeit, and lust, till wantonness and pride
Raise out of friendship hostile deeds in peace.
The conquer'd also, and enslav'd by war,
Shall, with their freedom lost, all virtue lose,
And fear of God, from whom their piety feign'd
In sharp contest of battle found no aid
Against invaders.—
They err who count it glorious to subdue
By conquest far and wide, to over-run
Large countries, and in field great battles win,
Great cities by assault: What do these worthies?

Why, rob, and spoil, and burn, slaughter and inflame
 Peaceable nations, neighbouring or remote
 Made captive, yet deserving freedom more
 Than those their conquerors ; who leave behind
 Nothing but ruin wheresoe'er they rove,
 And all the flourishing works of peace destroy ;
 Then swell with pride, and must be titled gods,
 Great benefactors of mankind, deliverers ;
 Till conq'ror death discovers them scarce men,
 Rolling in brutish vices, and deform'd,
 Violent or shameful death their due reward."

MILTON.

WRITTEN BY DR. PORTEOUS, BISHOP OF LONDON.

" 'TWAS not enough
 By subtle fraud to snatch a single life,
 Punny impiety ! whole kingdoms fell,
 To fate the lust of power ; more horrid still,
 The foulest stain and scandal of our nature
 Became its boast—One murder made a Villain,
 Millions a Hero !—Princes were privileged
 To kill, and numbers sanctify'd the crime.
 Ah ! why will Kings forget that they are Men ?
 And Men that they are Brethren ? Why delight
 In human sacrifice ? Why burst the ties
 Of Nature, that should knit their souls together
 In one soft band of amity and love ?
 Yet still they breathe destruction, still go on
 Inhumanly ingenious to find out
 New pains for life, new horrors for the grave ;
 Artificers of Death ! still Monarchs dream
 Of universal Empire growing up
 From universal ruin ! **BLAST THE DESIGN,**
GREAT GOD OF HOSTS ! NOR LET THY CREATURES FALL
UNPITED VICTIMS AT AMBITION'S SHRINE."

ODE TO THE DRUM.

" I Hate that drum's discordant sound,
 Parading round, and round, and round,
 To thoughtless youth it pleasure yields,
 And lures from cities and from fields :
 To sell their liberty for charms,
 Of tawdry lace, and glitt'ring arms ;
 And when ambition's voice commands
 To march, and fight, and fall in foreign lands.

I hate that drum's discordant sound,
 Parading round, and round, and round ;
 To me it talks of ravag'd plains,
 And burning towns, and ruin'd swains,
 And mangled limbs, and dying groans,
 And widow's tears and orphan's moans ;
 And all that misery's hand bestows,
 To swell the catalogue of human woes!"

When shall such toys decoy no mōre,
 And hostile cannons cease to roar ?
 Ah ! when will Brethren drop their rage,
 Cease 'gainst each other war to wage,
 When men as foes no longer meet,
 But shall their swords to plough-shares beat ?
 In spite of earth, in spite of hell,
 War shall yet cease the list of woes to swell.

THINE ear, Almighty God, incline,
 To hear our pray'rs, our cause make thine ;
 When Orphans cry, the poor complain,
 And Widows weep, do not refrain.
 In wrath is rear'd thy mighty hand,
 While war—dire war afflicts our Land ;
 Thy scourge the angry nations feel,
 And states, as with an earthquake, reel.
 Ah ! Europe bleeds at ev'ry vein,
 Mourns cities burnt, and myriads slain,
 Whose carnage fertile vallies fills,
 While blood still flows in thousand rills.
 In these dire scenes, ye Britons, hark
 To God's dread voice, your guilt thence mark ;
 This points the piece, and whets the steel,
 And makes proud sinners vengeance feel.
 A nations sins forebode her fate,
 Not fare repented of too late ;
 These furnish triumphs to her foes,
 And turn her prosp'rous state to woes.
 To duty turn, be timely wise,
 Implore forgiveness from the Skies ;
 Your sins break off before too late,
 And the decree bring forth your fate.
 Of human aid make not your boast,
 No king is saved by an host ;

For cursed is the man who makes
Frail flesh his arm, thence courage takes†.

How long, ye Friends of Mars, how long,
Shall war's dire art its sway prolong?

† They that make creatures their confidence, are but preparing shame and confusion for themselves; when they shall be ashamed, as the prophet speaks, of the oaks which they have desired, and confounded for the gardens that they have chosen. Undue dependance on man, or human aid, whether in individuals or communities, is as really idolatry in God's sight, as the worship of stocks and stones, and often visited with as exemplary punishment. Hence these and the like cautions and warnings; "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord:—Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of? —Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish." Have we not placed of late too much trust in princes, when we have purchased their aid so dear? and is it not just with God to leave them to prove a bruised reed, whereon he that leaneth falls to the ground, or is wounded?

Too much reason hath the nation to lament this war as one of God's heavy judgments, when its consequences are adverted to; a war, the peculiar principle of which seems to be, to set the maxims of prudence, the rules of sound policy, the voice of reason, and the dictates of humanity, at defiance. What injury to trade and commerce! What accumulation of national debt! a hundred millions added to the former load is no light matter. What destruction of the human species, without answering one valuable purpose! besides the miseries entailed on surviving relatives. It has been calculated, that from two manufacturing towns, Manchester and Birmingham, not fewer than 60,000 have been enlisted during the course of this war, most of them mechanics. When a sum extends to millions, few people can form an adequate notion of it. The Reader will perhaps be surprised when told, that a single million will take 11 lunar months, 13 days, 9 hours and 20 minutes to one person to tell, calculating at the rate of L. 5. a minute, and allowing 12 hours a day for that purpose. What is the cause of the above prodigious waste then? To this question the Editor of a noted London paper hath given the following answer, "The cause of the War with France, as stated by the infamous Treaty of Pilnitz, was *plunder and partition*; as stated by Lord Grenville, was *the opening of the Scheldt*; as stated by Mr Pitt, was *the invasion of Holland*; as stated by Lord Hood, was *the re-establishment of Monarchy in France*; as stated by Mr Burke, *the preservation of the Corinthian Pillar of polished life*; as stated by Mr Powis, was *to prevent the progress of Jacobin principles, &c.*; as stated by Mr Windham, was *the preservation of British Freedom, and the British Constitution*." To this the Editor subjoins, "We would be glad that these sage politicians would now assign their respective causes for its further prosecution."

In these sheets, in which the Author hath attempted to discharge a duty to God, and his Country, it was his object to direct the attention of the Reader to our public sins, and the judgments they have procured, and he has the highest authority in the nation to justify the view he has given of both †. "We command that a Public Fast and Humiliation be observed—that so both we and our people may humble ourselves before Almighty God, in order to obtain pardon of our sins, and may, in the most devout and solemn manner, send up our prayers and supplications to the Divine Majesty, for averting those *heavy judgments* which our *manifold sins and provocations* have most justly deserved, &c." The signs of the times, as our Lord terms them, being neither few nor obscure, it is morally impossible for a feeling mind to contemplate these in measures fraught with misery to millions, and yet forbear to lament them, and direct the attention of others to them. The Lord's hand is lifted up, blessed are they that see it.

† His Majesty's Proclamations for a Public Fast.

How long shall hostile bands appear,
And man his Brother wound and tear?

Oh! when shall nations, tir'd of woe,
Their mutual jéalousies forego;
Convert their bloody swords and spears,
To pruning hooks, and to plough-shares?

Let mankind soon as Brethren own,
From cot, each other, to the throne;
Nor av'rice more, or pride divide
Those who so nearly are allay'd.

O Thou whose word can quickly bind
The swelling floods, and stormy wind,
The furious tame, the proud abase,
And from the dust the humble rase.

May Afric's race soon break their chains,
Exchange their life of woe and pains;
Their masters threats, and drivers blows,
For gifts that Liberty bestows!

Offended God, their cause now plead,
To manly Freedom rase their head;
Make them, in turn, the dread of those,
Who, without cause, are still their foes †!

† The Reader will not think the above with uncharitable, which hath only the irreclaimable foes of God and man for its object, when he adverts to a clause in a late congratulatory address to the King, by Dr Horsley, Bishop of Rochester, and Dean of Westminster: "We your Majesty's &c. the Dean and Chapter of your Collegiate church of St. Peter, Westminster," &c.—"And our prayers daily ascend to the Almighty, that he would continue to watch over your Majesty for good: and over your enemies for evil."

Since these verses were written, a motion was carried in the House of Commons, "That leave be given to bring in a bill for totally abolishing the Traffic in Slaves by English subjects, and that the House do resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider of the same." The motion passed by a majority of 26—for it 93—against it 67. It is to be much wished this step may be followed up to a total and speedy abolition, and entire emancipation; but there is reason to fear that this will not be soon the consequence. Tho' a good deed, or an act of justice cannot be done too soon, yet may it come too late to prevent the fatal effects of former delay. Merit may indeed be made of necessity, but this is not entitled to much praise. Tho' the proposed abolition were effected, there is reason to fear that justly offended Heaven would cast in our face the dung of such a partial and constrained sacrifice to the long insulted claims of humanity and justice, and visit upon our nation the guilt contracted in the desolating progres of this infernal traffic. When the righteous Judge of all the earth enters into judgment, he will not compromise matters with a guilty, impenitent people, or accept the claims of justice by halves. This he awfully verified upon that proud oppressor, and cruel slave-dealer Pharaoh, whom British Slave-dealers and their patrons far exceed, and in his fate, they, and indeed all oppressors may see their own deserved doom. That tyrant, when the hand of God lay heavy upon him and his people, could relent, and make involuntary, and partial concessions, which he however, afterwards retracted, his heart going still after his covetousness; whence he perished, with his forces, in the rash and

Dispose to wait for thee our God,
And humbly kiss the smiting rod ;

unhallowed attempt of bringing back the rescued Hebrews to their former state of servitude. The lover of humanity can scarce forbear exclaiming, So perish all the incorrigible foes of God and man, all the obstinate troublers of mankind, who turn the world upside down, in their wicked attempts to oppose the will and glory of the former, and the happiness of the latter.

The King of nations needs not the aid of a British parliament to abolish the traffic in question, or to emancipate those on whom it hath entailed slavery and woe; and there is reason to believe he will pour contempt upon it: for "he loves a cheerful giver." Should he pass over Britain's guilt in this traffic, without some signal tokens of his just displeasure, it would injure him in the eyes of heavenly intelligences; but this is morally impossible. Bad as mankind are, that prince who permitted one part of his subjects to enslave and oppress the other, without benefit to himself, while he declined to employ his power to protect the injured, and redress their wrongs, would be execrated as by common consent. Let not oppressors then construe respite on God's part into impunity; for a vengeance to be inflicted even ages hence, is as near in his view, as that which is to be inflicted to-morrow, is in ours. Verily the vengeance merited by the causeless effusion of human blood, and the criminal servitude of fellow creatures, flumereth not.

That nation whom we have been so often taught to consider as monsters of barbarity, atheists and what not, have abolished slavery in all their dominions. How dignified and humane their late conduct, in proclaiming liberty to our captives on the African coast, and opening the prison to those whom we had bound in fetters! How noble the conduct of a Captain of one of their privateers or frigates lately! Having captured some of our slave ships on the West India coast, instead of disposing of their cargoes of human captives, as British avarice would have taught him, at some neutral island, he had the philanthropy to land them where he knew they would be all declared free, and treated as Brethren, which was actually the case. Thus he preferred the happiness of strangers to his own private fortune; yet must have felt a pleasure in this noble action, which the lordly sons of avarice shall never taste. They make no profession of religion, yet do the things it commands: but we, on the contrary, make great professions of religion, yet act in direct opposition to its precepts. Contrast with the above our public conduct. In the American war, we gave the Indians a proffered price for the scalps of our revolted Brethren, a salutary correction to reclaim them to the blessings of British Freedom! By proclamation we invited the French planters to put themselves under the British government, from this motive among others, that thereby their slaves would be kept in subjection, or from obtaining liberty. By proclamation, we also fixed a price on the heads of the Maroon Negroes in the West Indies; and of late, as the Jamaica papers, and ours from them, inform us, have sent to Cuba for packs of ferocious Blood Hounds, to hunt them down, which, we were told, had arrived at our camp. Thus we employ the same means to extirpate that poor people, which the Spaniards employed to extirpate the original inhabitants of America. And for what crime are these wretched negroes hunted down as wild beasts? Why, for shewing themselves men, by asserting their liberty and independence, in opposing us, and their former tyrants, amidst their native woods and mountains. To the fatal effects of such measures the unoffending—even defenceless females, and helpless children, are chiefly exposed. Heavens! how long shall such deeds tarnish the fame, and stain the annals of a civilized nation? How long will those who abet and practise them, have the effrontery to boast of humanity, religion, liberty, and the love of justice!

If any thing hath been unfairly stated, or exaggerated in these sheets, which might easily happen in advertizing to so many different circumstances, the candid Reader will impute this to inadvertency, misinformation, or a concern about the real or apprehended evils animadverted on, and not to design, or disaffection to the civil, or religious interests of our Country.

Till thou shalt our Deliv'rance send,
And cause our woes in joys to end.

O let thy wisdom ever guide
All those o'er nations that preside,
That 'neath their mild and equal sway,
These share may peace and joy alway.

Let bended knees surround thy throne,
And worship rise to thee alone ;
Most High and mighty is thy name,
And Sacred Majesty thy claim.

How long will mortals dare invade
His attributes who all things made,
And would be gods, to flight Him bold,
Unmindful of their earthly mould ?

He of no rival will admit,
Whether in throne, or cot they sit,
Whence his dread threat contempt to shed
On those who vie with him their Head.

Thine arm reveal, great King of kings,
Which to the poor salvation brings ;
That mighty Arm of old which broke,
From Ifra'l's neck the tyrant's yoke.

Afunder burst each servile chain,
Let Truth and Reason only reign,
True love prevail, and discord cease,
And bid fell Wars soon end in Peace !



THE END.

